THE SAND DOCTOR

ARNOLD MULDER

"THE SAND DOCTOR" more than fulfills the expectations aroused by Mr. Mulder's previous novel, "The Outbound Road," of which the *Nation* said: "What we need in American fiction is just such simple veracity, insight, sane and liberal human feeling as Arnold Mulder displays."

Against the picturesque background of the sand dunes of the Great Lakes, the author has placed three finely conceived and vividly drawn characters, — a doctor so immersed in science that he neglects his routine practice, his fair-weather wife, and her young lover, a strange case of dual personality.

The infinite fascination of the sand dunes, against which the drama of these three characters is set, has never before been described with such sincere and moving skill. Mr. Mulder writes of the dunes as other men have written of the sea, or as Hardy can write about the heaths and farm lands of England.

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THE SAND DOCTOR

ARNOLD MULDER

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The Sand Doctor

BY

ARNOLD MULDER

Author of "The Outbound Road"
"Bram of the Five Corners," etc.

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THE SAND DOCTOR

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The Sand Doctor

CHAPTER I

Dr. Briar Quentin — he was still boyishly proud of the "Dr." because he was not yet fully entitled to it — eagerly grasped the unexpected opportunity for a day's tramp among the sand hills. It was Janley's Sunday off, but Janley, for reasons of his own, preferred to wait two weeks, and Briar knew that a fortnight hence autumn would probably have changed into winter. To-day might be his last chance.

"Of course, Janley," he assented, but not too eagerly, for fear that his fellow-interne might withdraw the offer.

And he did not tell Janley that he was going to make a twenty-five-mile trip on the interurban for the sole purpose of spending a brilliant Sunday among bleak sand hills — alone. Janley would have laughed, and perhaps he would have told the nurses. Briar still had seven months of his interneship in the Bennett Hospital to serve before he would be a full-fledged doctor, and he did not care to become the butt of any one's wit.

He left Sisson on the early car, ostensibly to spend the day with his sister Mildred, John P. Nash's wife, in Finley. But he did not go near Nash's place. He did not care to waste his time, and the hills lured him. From the car

window he saw them silhouetted against the cloudless sky. He singled out the Crownéd Monarch, stark and bare, with its cupola of sand, out of which, he knew, scrub poplars would be reaching up toward the sky at an acute angle with their mother soil.

For some five hours he wandered in his familiar haunts without meeting a single human being except his old friend Martin Skager, skipper of the fishing tug Marie, who was mending nets on the shore of the river where his tug was tied up. Briar had never seen the dunes so deserted. The leaves of the wild grape that trailed up the slopes of the hills were frozen, the straggling poplar and wild-cherry trees were half denuded, the wooded slopes of the dunes were tinted with brown. All these familiar details caught his attention as they had never been able to do before his long absence from the hills. There was the excitement of rediscovery, and once or twice he caught himself talking out loud, addressing inanimate objects as if they were sentient.

"Well, well, you old devil" — he addressed the gaunt and stripped dead top of what had once been a great beechnut-tree, now sticking denuded and bare out of a sand hill's slope — "still here as big as life." And he affectionately congratulated the tree on its defiance to the sand hill that had crushed out its life.

Among the hills it seemed entirely natural to speak out loud. He had the illusion of being alone in the world. This feeling became so strong after hours of wandering without meeting anything more alive than a squirrel and a flock of sparrows that he talked with as little self-consciousness

as was felt by any of the wood creatures in their gay chatter. And the feeling grew that all the trees and shrubs and hills and vines were personalities.

He crossed a "traveling dune" that was encroaching upon the edge of the Big Swamp; it had shaken itself free of the clinging tendril roots of shrubs and vines and was only bare sand, nothing else — millions of tons of it traveling with relentless persistence to the open spaces of the swamp, its slope a beautiful half-oval. And all over the face of it were thousands of "sand ripples," an inch or so apart, like so many tiny wavelets rigidified. The thrill of the first sight of them was indescribable. Just so he remembered them a half-dozen years ago before he had left Finley for medical school in Chicago. Reason vetoed the impulsive notion that they were the identical "sand ripples" of earlier years; he knew that the winds had obliterated and reshaped them a thousand times since then, that the whole mass of millions of tons of sand had traveled several feet. But in defiance of reason, he greeted them with a little shout, as he might have called to a friend after long absence.

In the middle of the afternoon he climbed to the top of the Crownéd Monarch. The October sun was beating down upon the sand, making it warm and pleasant to the touch. He would have a good look around — over the dunes to the north, over Finley to the south, over the Big Swamp and the Larramore Farms beyond to the east, and over the lake to the west. Then he would have to be getting back to catch the six o'clock car for Sisson.

He stood for a moment beside the sand cupola and

stretched out his arms. The illusion of being alone in the universe was stronger than ever. He was mastered by an uncontrollable desire to hear his own voice. And he did something that even years later was able to fill him with a shamed chagrin whenever he thought of it.

If he had only let out some high-sounding line of verse, rich and orotund, it would not have been so distressing. He might have addressed the lake with the familiar "Roll on, thou dark and deep blue Ocean, roll!" There would have been something appropriate in that, and in a pinch he could have faced it out. But he was not thinking of what was appropriate. He was wholly lacking in self-consciousness for the moment. And he had but recently been practicing on the typewriter at the hospital to be able to make out reports in typescript. And the sentence that most easily and naturally came to his mind was:

"This is the time for all good men to come to the aid of the party!"

He declaimed it in a clear, ringing voice, oratorically, tone unrestrained, as if he wished the words to carry to the most distant hills.

For a moment he stood listening to catch the echo. Then — a low snicker!

Startled, he stood like a squirrel aquiver, almost ready to yield to an impulse to flight down the hill to hide himself in the shrubbery below and not reappear until a thrice-welcome darkness should come to cover his shame with its mantle. But he conquered the impulse. He laboriously began to climb up the sand cupola to investigate the source of the snicker. . . .

The fact that Hallie lived in Sisson seemed curiously exciting to both. Each secretly resolved to see more of the other. Hallie and her father and mother would spend a few more days at Carcassonne, their cottage among the dunes, before returning to town. But before he finally boarded the seven o'clock car — not the six o'clock, he had missed that — Briar had tactfully (he thought) elicited from Hallie the probable date and hour of their return.

On his way from the station to the hospital he walked by the home of the Kesters. It was several blocks out of his way, but he wanted to see where Hallie lived. The house was unpretentious. Old Judge Kester, a Civil War veteran, had made something of a name for himself in Finley during his long years on the bench, but he had not been a money-maker; even the cottage among the Finley dunes was in large part an economy. Living was cheap there, and now that he was superannuated and his two sons were married, the old man could spend as many months of the year out of town as he liked. Briar had never met him, but he had seen his name often in the Sisson "Evening News." He foresaw now that he would meet the old man soon.

The friendship of Briar and Hallie, thus begun on the top of the Crownéd Monarch, grew rapidly. By the time April snow had melted in the hollows among the hills all the really vital decisions had been made between them. Briar, to his own surprise, proved an impetuous lover, and he was able to tell his sister Mildred that he was going to marry Hallie before Mildred knew Hallie existed. . . .

It always seemed peculiarly appropriate to Hallie that their first meeting had taken place among the dunes.

"It was ordained that way." She was half serious, but she pretended to laugh at the notion.

"Of course it was" — with good-humored mockery; "thirty million years ago, when the machinery was first set in motion that was to result in you and me, they hitched on a little pulley that would regulate things so our first meeting would be in the dunes!"

But Hallie called Briar a prosy scientist, and she continued to play romanticist on this point.

There had been so many chances of their never meeting that it seemed a little too much to assign the whole thing to a law of averages or to whatever it was that was held responsible for such things. If Briar had not had a holiday unexpectedly given him that Sunday when he was scheduled to be on duty; if he had not decided to spend it tramping among the dunes, going to the trouble of traveling twenty-five miles on the interurban train to reach them; if he had climbed any other sand hill but the Crownéd Monarch; if, after climbing it, he had not yielded to that most unaccountable impulse to break into declamation; if she, Hallie, had not that day had a curious desire to see the lake from the Crownéd Monarch's cupola; if, after climbing to its top, she had been able to suppress a slight snicker — if any one of this long train of trifling events had not taken place, she and Briar would have missed each other. He would have gone back to his interneship at the hospital, she would have returned to her father's dune cottage. A half a century later their paths in life might perhaps

have crossed and they would not have known each other! Think of meeting as a woman of sixty-five or so and a man of seventy, and one not knowing who the other was, and not caring! The thought made her shudder a little. Yet it would have been more than likely, by the law of averages, if she had been able to suppress one little snicker.

They had theories about happiness, a little vague, a little fantastic — that is, they would have seemed fantastic to others — but delightful. Worth hours and hours of discussion. An important part of the serious business of life.

"Why, of course, Briar, we're going to be happy. That's what people marry for, to be happy, don't they?"

"Oh, others!" said Briar contemptuously. It was he now who was the romanticist, as she had been a moment ago. Hallie laughed at him, but secretly in her heart she fully agreed that Briar's contempt for "others" was justified.

Briar tried to make his thought clear. He groped for words. It was all so much more inclusive than any words could express. It had to do with all of life, not with love only. It had had its beginnings years before he had met Hallie.

"Of course happy" — he echoed her words — "the two of us together — loving each other. But that's something will come of itself, because we love each other. But what I mean is — it is n't just you and I as lovers, together, but also the two of us separately, you as a woman and I as a man. Our happiness because we love each other is a part of the whole. We want more than most others want. We want real things."

Hallie did not at that time know the full meaning of all that he read into that word "real," but she assented eagerly.

"That's just it, Briar. I'm so glad you feel that way about it. We don't care to go in for things that don't count — only for things that are genuine — solid — really substantial."

And she amplified her thought.

"There's you for one thing — your career. You are going to be big — not flashy and theatrically notorious" — with a faint smile, because it was not the exact word she wanted — "but really big, substantial — not a Sunday supplement specialist, but some one the real people like your famous Dr. Hazzeldeen will look up to and respect."

Briar took all this so much for granted that he hardly rose to her enthusiasm. All she had enumerated went without saying. But Hallie rushed on, fondling his hand. They were alone in a wilderness of sand hills, and it was twilight on the top of the Crownéd Monarch.

They indulged in eager plans. As one of the details there was to be a house. They sketched floor-plans in the sand, and Hallie enthusiastically furnished the rooms, going into great detail about velvet rugs, and dimity curtains, and a china-closet with glass shelves, and a fireplace, and mahogany dining-room table and chairs, and white enameled woodwork upstairs. And so on and so on, Briar paying close attention, but thinking more of how lovely she was when her eyes were shining with enthusiasm than of the house she was describing. But *their* house was going to be a home, they insisted. Their insistence on this somehow

carried the implication that the houses of other young married couples were merely houses and nothing more. Their house was not to be valued primarily for its own sake, but was to be part of the setting of their lives — not a house merely, but something that would be organically affiliated with their united personality.

"But it will be nice, Briar" — Hallie halted the plans; "I mean — really *nice* — not 'love in a hut' and all that kind of thing."

Briar was quick to agree, glad that Hallie was not to be caught by sentimental phrases in a maxim book.

And there were other items. They kept filling in the picture later as the beautiful weeks passed. They would have a cottage in the dunes where they would spend their summers. It would have a wide porch facing the west, and they would often sit there and watch the sun go down and the stars come out. It would have to be built within view of the Crownéd Monarch, so that, raising their eyes, they could see its cupola of sand. It would be simple in design and simply furnished, as a summer cottage should be.

"But nice," Hallie again insisted; and "Of course," Briar agreed. And it occurred to neither of them that "nice," in their use of the word, meant the same as "expensive." Money did not enter very concretely into their calculations. Briar, of course, was to be successful; had n't the famous Dr. Hazzeldeen predicted great things for him? Money would come as a natural corollary to that success, and they would spend the money for things that were worth while.

There would be trips to New York and Chicago: Briar

would have to keep in touch with the big men in his profession. And then after a while Europe.

It was plain sailing from the beginning. Briar would, of course, work hard, and Hallie would make things "nice" at home. They would work out their plans systematically, as the years passed.

"But we must n't be rigid about them, Briar; we must leave the way open to surprises; surprises are fun."

"For instance," mockingly, "throwing over our house plans to become personal physician to the President, with the title of Rear Admiral or Major-General or whatever they call 'im!"

Hallie laughed. But it was not as preposterous as it sounded. Anyway, that was what she meant by keeping the way open to surprises. . . .

When his interneship at the Bennett Hospital was ended, Briar opened an office in Finley. They would be near the dunes there.

And during the first summer of their marriage they lived at Carcassonne, Hallie's father having loaned the cottage to them for the time being. They stayed until late autumn, and even then Hallie left the place with a regretful sigh, to move into their rented house in Finley. She had been happy at Carcassonne, so happy that sometimes it almost seemed somehow a little wicked. The gods would make her pay for her happiness, said the Puritan in her. But with the hopefulness of youth, she only half believed this. And she did not express her vague fears to Briar. He would have laughed and called her a superstitious old woman.

CHAPTER II

The beginnings of Dr. Briar Quentin's life were very closely associated — in Briar's mind at least — with the lake and the dunes. Not the beginnings of his physical life: he was nearly twelve years old when he saw the place for the first time. And then it did not impress him particularly — a winding shore-line of sand hills, tree-bespattered, and the rest just water. And many of the sand hills seemed rather bare to the boy's eyes; they did not have the fascination, for instance, of a woods where all sorts of interesting things, a rabbit or a nest of bumble-bees, might be lurking.

And during the first two years of the family's life in Finley, after moving there from Chicago because Briar's father could do better for himself in the Finley Belting Works, the boy paid scant attention to the environs of the city. In winter, as a matter of course, he fished through the ice on the river for perch, and in summer he mingled with the summer resorters, marveling at their wealth and the splendor of their gay clothes. But of the dunes he was hardly conscious; and the lake — locally known as the "big lake," to distinguish it from the river which was almost a bay — was only a body of water. It had size, but what was size? You could see only so much of it anyway. That portion of the lake that lay out there beyond the horizon could never have anything to do with him, Briar, until he should sail out into it as he often longed to

do when he saw Martin Skager's fishing tug Marie setting out from its little dock in the morning; and when he did sail into it, well, time then to fit it into relevancy with himself.

But that that which lay beyond was relevant to him was forced upon him after the family had lived in Finley a year or two. Briar was about fourteen or so at the time, and it was in reality the beginning of himself as a personality — in his own thought of himself at least. Before this he was merely the usual small boy, looked upon by his practically adult sister Mildred as a nuisance when she wanted the porch for herself and young John Nash, of whose recently hung-out lawyer's shingle on Front Street she was very proud. But now abruptly Briar was catapulted into life by the wide spaces of the lake that lay beyond the horizon. They taught him, with Nature's usual sardonic grimness in time of turmoil, that the lake was not merely a body of water. Though what lay beyond the sky-line could not be seen, it could display a power and strike a terror in the heart that a lifetime could not obliterate from the memory. The lake was patient and the hills were placid, and even a fourteen-year-old boy could snap his fingers at them. But when he saw them in the day of their power he understood that if it had not been for what lay beyond the range of vision — the wide fields of water in a landless world under an arching sky — there could never have been the display of power and of terror that in a moment of time changed the whole course of his life.

He petitioned to stay at home with Martin Skager when

the rest of the family — his father and mother, nineteen-year-old Mildred, and the "baby," aged nine — went to Chicago to attend the funeral of his maternal grandfather. He calculated that the old fisherman could be induced to take him along on the Marie, and there was more adventure in prospect there than even at a funeral, including a trip to Chicago. He and Martin Skager were great friends. The family readily granted his prayer because the trip would be expensive enough as it was without him.

The trip on the Marie on the second day of his stay at the Skager cottage on the dune side of the river was as exciting as he had expected. But it was the excitement of a boy of fourteen; twenty-four hours later he had aged almost to maturity in outlook.

He was to go again the next day, but Martin Skager, cocking his wise old head to one side, looked dubious.

"I expect your ma would n't be stuck on it, Briar, what with this breeze blowin'. It 's goin' to be stiff to-morrow."

But Briar pooh-poohed the fisherman's fears. He was on his own and he was ready to take the responsibility.

"Why, look here, Martin Skager," he said with a great show of reasonableness, "how long you been in the fishing business?"

"Twenty-two year, Briar Quentin," Martin imitated his serious reasonableness, with a gleam of merriment in his eyes.

"An' you never got wrecked all that time — did n't you have some stiff breezes all those years? Still, you ain't dead yet!"

Martin Skager slapped his leg.

"By G—— Christmas!" hastily correcting himself in deference to the boy's youth; "you got a head on you what can figger things out!"

His affection for Briar was genuine. It was almost as exciting for the fisherman to have the boy staying with him as it was for Briar to be there. "Makes a man feel kinda — a — fathery!" he thought, curving his grimy thumbs under his suspenders and stretching the elastic; and his old bachelor soul expanded in the glow of the thought. But it was quite a responsibility. Of course, the little breeze on the lake did not look like anything to Briar who, after a single day's experience, felt that he knew all there was to be known about things maritime and that he would be equal to any situation on the water. Martin Skager knew that the boy was certain to be far more self-confident than he, Martin Skager, would dare to be. That was characteristic, not only of boys, but also of grown-ups who had had but a slight taste of life on the lake. Later they became less sure of themselves. "Guess I'd be same way if they'd get me into something I don't know nothin' about," he mused philosophically, —"like bein' President or runnin' a circus or something: I'd think myself a hell-snorter after the first day, an' then I'd begin to learn I did n't know enough to sneeze at!"

"'T ain't the breeze so much, Briar," he demurred to the boy's contempt for what the lake could do to him, "but she smells ugly."

"She?"

"Oh, everything — the air, the lake, the wind," the fisherman explained. "And do you see that?" pointing

to a little cloud of dune sand that was caught in a spiral of whirlwind.

"Rats, Martin, what's a little sand?"

Martin Skager smiled.

"*Little!*" verbally underscoring the word; "there's three hundred million tons of it in them dunes — more or less!" he added, in the interest of exact truth.

"But what's sand?"

"What's sand? What's sand?" with curious excitement. "It's — it's — " He struggled for a sufficiently vigorous metaphor. "It's hell, if it has a mind to be," he said at last — "beggin' your pardon, Briar. But it's just that when it takes it into its head. It works slow, but sure as — as — Fate, as a college perfessor would say. Don't you go despisin' no sand, 'specially not dune sand."

The boy was surprised at his friend's earnestness. Martin Skager talked almost as if sand might be dangerous. Sand! He smiled skeptically to himself. Martin Skager in his wisdom understood that smile.

"D' you see them hills out there?" pointing to a group of dunes by themselves that looked like the gathering of a clan. Briar nodded. "That once was Finley — the only Finley there was. But the hills got it into their noodles to tuck the town under nice an' snug an' warm, an' there it is, twenty to fifty feet below the sand. Took quite a spell for the sand to do it, but what's time to sand?"

Briar was impressed. But he was not reconciled to staying at home the next day.

"I guess it'll let up before to-morrow," he said hopefully.

"Maybe," doubtfully, "but she smells ugly."

All night long the wind howled around the little house of Martin Skager in its natural shelter near the river. It was November and rather cold even for that time of the year. Briar in his large bed slept fitfully. He woke up frequently, and every time he listened with a hopefulness that an older person, better acquainted with the heedlessness of the forces of Nature to man and his concerns, could not have maintained. Each time he guessed that it was not blowing as hard as before; but often, even as the thought was forming, the house would shake as if struck a sudden blow by a mammoth flail in the hands of a cosmic giant, and Briar would exclaim, "Rats!" and go to sleep again.

Once when he woke up, passing his tongue over his lips, he found them gritty. Whatever it was, it got into his mouth, and his teeth crunched on it.

"Sand!" he thought.

He felt over the covers with his hand in the dark. They too felt curiously gritty. He got up to close the window that, to Martin Skager's amusement, he had left open, as Miss Steadfast, the fat city visiting nurse, had taught him in school to do. His bare feet on the board floor felt the sand.

He looked out. The sky was ink, but there was a swirl in the air. Sand, of course, he thought. In the near-distance the roar of the lake drowned out every other sound. The wind was coming in jerky spurts. It seemed to rest from time to time for a moment, and then it struck with a force that was momentarily terrifying. Briar shuddered and ran back to bed. He drew the covers over his head

and drew up his knees almost to his chin. The nest was delightfully warm. He shivered, listening to the wind.

"Guess maybe it won't let up," he sighed. It was a dirty shame. To-morrow the family would be back, and it would have to be to-morrow or never.

In the middle of the night the low, dull moan of the foghorn on the piers began to punctuate the noise of the storm. It sent out a long, low blast in a heavy bass voice and then for a few moments it was silent. Again the low blast and again silence. The intervals were carefully measured. Briar could just count thirteen between blasts, counting one to each beat of his heart. He experimented with it, his hand on his breast inside his nightshirt. The exactness with which it worked fascinated him, and for a little while this new alien noise in the welter of other sounds kept him awake. Also, it frightened him a little. There was an ominous sound about the foghorn. He had often heard it in town, but it had never affected him quite this way before. Here, out in the open, with the dunes on one side, the lake on the other, and the river flowing past, it made him shiver a little. He was beginning to appreciate the force of Martin Skager's phrase, "She smells ugly." He understood now that that was not wholly a physical smell.

The loose window frames kept up a continual clatter, as did the doors. Every board in Martin Skager's house seemed to be loose.

"Wonder how the Marie is getting along?" Briar thought. Of course, here in the river at the dock it was never bad — not like out in the big lake, but —

He fell asleep again, and later woke up when Martin Skager came into the house carrying a lantern. Briar was unreasonably surprised. He had not heard the fisherman go out. Sitting up, he blinked into the dim light.

"Went out to tuck the Marie in a little snugger," Martin Skager explained. Then, recurring to the conversation of the evening, "What say, d' you think she'll let up before morning?"

Briar smiled sheepishly, resigned to giving up the trip on the Marie to the fishing grounds. It was good to be safe and warm here with Martin Skager. He no longer felt contemptuous toward the lake. Before Martin Skager had drawn off his rubber boots Briar was asleep.

Down upon the tin roof with its coat of tar came the clatter of rain. It was driven along before the wind, and large blobs of it pelted against the small window panes. But Briar, resigned now and restless no longer, was not awakened by it.

But later, for no reason, he awoke to a curious sense of disaster. The night was still inky black. The foghorn continued to send out its doleful notes, and the roar of the lake was competing with the howl of the wind. There was rain and sand in the air, and the windows and doors were keeping up their insane clatter.

But there was nothing to be afraid of. He was safe. Since he had to give up the trip on the Marie anyway, he was glad it was so stormy that it was wholly out of the question. The stormier the better now, the wilder and noisier, the better. The more impossible the trip, the less he would be regretting it. . . .

But out on the open lake Captain Flint, of the City of Finley, did not share this wish. The City of Finley was a side-wheeler; for years it had been regarded as one of the safest boats of the Hammond Line. And to-night the fat, jolly-eyed captain was not seriously worried. His vessel had come through worse storms than this; although, good sailor that he was, Captain Flint did not despise the present gale. He would not be sorry to be in the shelter of the river, safe at the dock at Finley. The weather was ugly, to be sure, and a good many of the passengers were pretty uncomfortable, but in an hour or two they would be at ease, the boat tied up to the dock. Bucking the storm the City of Finley had lost time, but she would run in between the piers not so very late after all. By daylight the gangplank would be out. The captain looked at his watch calculatingly.

But the next hour brought a surprise even to the experienced Captain Flint. The gale did not progress with a logical increment of force as he had had a reasonable right to expect. Three quarters of an hour out of the harbor there was a tremendous onrush that made the passengers turn white. Not a soul on board, aside from members of the crew off duty, was asleep. People sat on the edge of their berths, eyeing life-preservers; some even were fully dressed. They were ashamed to leave their rooms, but the sound of the gong was not going to catch them unprepared.

"Hell's broke loose right," thought Captain Flint, and it was not as much comfort to him as it was to the passengers that they were near port. The gleam of the intermittent harbor-light at the Finley piers could be seen now and

again, and the dull, insistent moan of the foghorn penetrated through the shriller noises of the storm.

Captain Flint had half a mind to ride out the storm in the open lake. The ship could stand it easily. He knew what the City of Finley could do. But the passengers had to be reckoned with. Suppose the blow continued, how would the people take it? He knew from long experience that landlubbers always felt safest hugging the shore; they did n't have the sailor's instinct to stay as far away from shore as possible in a lake gale. And passengers were a panicky bunch sometimes. To them the open lake looked more ugly than it really was.

He decided to wait for dawn and then make a run for the piers. With some extra precautions the trick could be turned. . . .

He was standing on the bridge, exposed to the pelting of the cold rain, when the nose of the boat, an hour later, was being headed for its dash into the channel. His usually jolly face showed lines of strain. Such passengers as had come out to watch were easy in mind now. They were near something solid, that was all they thought of. But Captain Flint knew that the real test was just beginning. More than one Hammond boat had been swept past the ends of the two long piers at this critical moment and sucked out upon the sandbars beyond, to be pounded to pieces during the days that followed — passengers saved, but ship lost.

It was extremely difficult to aim for the middle of the channel in such a sea. Daylight had not yet come, and in the murky indistinctness of things the piers seemed to

waver like the ship. Seas were washing over the elevated walk to the lighthouse.

For a moment he had an illusion of having his ship safe, her nose in the exact middle of the channel. It was a difficult feat in a blow like this, and the sailor in him exulted at the technical skill of it. It was beautiful, it was immense. The exact center. Could n't have been done more neatly on a summer morning in June with nothing bigger than a ripple on the surface of the lake.

Captain Flint's face relaxed its look of strain. . . .

A crash and a bedlam of screams. Then all the lights on the boat went out, leaving the vessel ghastly in the murk of the early dawn.

Captain Flint had no time for surprise. The City of Finley was impaled on the end of the north pier. The lake had had a sardonic surprise for her. Waiting till the very last moment, when the ship's nose was all but in the comparative safety of the channel, a wave picked up the large steel vessel, lifted it bodily out of its course, and deposited it with a crash of cracking steel and splintering wood on the end of the breakwater. It was a display of sheer power that even experienced lake men were not prepared for.

The lights were out, the power shut off, wires broken. Confusion. People swarming to the deck. The vessel hanging precariously on the end of the pier, as if speared by the long arm and held suspended, partly in the water. The deck sloped at a dizzy angle.

There were cries and orders. No one heard anything. But the instinct for life asserted itself. Here below the lower edge of the ship was something solid. It could be

seen indistinct in the dawn. People jumped. Helter-skelter. No band playing "Nearer, My God, to Thee." A wild scramble. People picked themselves up as they fell, unheedful of perhaps a broken arm or a sprained ankle. They scurried along the long, wave-swept pier. It was at least solid. Now and again a sea caught a whole group and swept them into the lake, where they disappeared into the gloom of the water.

Eight minutes later the City of Finley fell off its precarious perch. Some people, lost in the confusing blackness when the lights went out, had not had time to reach the deck. Their bodies, some of them, were recovered weeks later. . . .

Briar was at the beach with Martin Skager when the refugees came streaming from the piers. It was not unpleasurable, the wild excitement, and he did not know then that nineteen men and women and children had died within the past ten minutes within a stone's throw of where he stood. Nobody knew until later, though some guessed it.

And neither did he know until some hours later that among the dead were his father, his mother, and his young brother, the "baby." At noon he saw their bodies lying blue and stark in the row on the beach where the life-saving crew had placed them. Mildred alone of the family had escaped. Some one — a stranger — had told her where to jump and she had obeyed blindly.

CHAPTER III

MILDRED was five years older than Briar. She was nineteen at the time of the wreck of the City of Finley and was already engaged to be married to John P. Nash, not then the prosperous lawyer he afterwards became. The tragedy hastened the marriage, as there seemed nothing else for the girl to turn to. And when not yet fifteen Briar was left alone.

So much alone that Mildred might almost as well have gone down with the City of Finley. Her marriage to John P. Nash robbed the boy of his sister almost completely. He did not like Nash and Nash did not like him. From the very beginning the two had felt an instinctive antipathy toward one another, and neither of them had been at great pains to hide it. Had the fourteen-year-old boy been left entirely without relatives, some one might have adopted him and given him a home, but that did not seem necessary now under the circumstances. Few persons in Finley knew of him, and the tragedy of his sudden bereavement had been swallowed up in the greater tragedy of the loss of the City of Finley.

At the time of Mildred's marriage there was some talk of his making his home with her, but Briar himself vetoed this half-hearted plan. He decided to make his own way, much to the relief of Nash, who salved his conscience for not doing anything material for Briar by establishing a kind of moral guardianship over him. In lieu of meals and

lodging and clothes, John P. Nash generously gave the boy advice, which Briar invariably took by doing exactly the opposite. He early developed independence of outlook, and he did not allow the lawyer to lord it over him even in those trifling matters that did not count. Earning his own bread and butter, he claimed a right to his own opinions, and never once would he admit that John P. Nash had any rights over him, in spite of certain legal documents in the lawyer's safe.

"*Briar* is right," John P. Nash sometimes observed, in sarcastic comment on his young brother-in-law's name; "the little runt's so blamed thorny, he'd scratch up concrete if given a chance!"

But to others he frequently pointed out that it was good for the boy to make his own way. John P. was full of maxims about Success, and he never failed to quote them when Briar was under discussion. In time, when Briar managed to get himself into college, John P. took credit for it — because he had not made things soft and easy for the boy. He had seen so many go wrong because of that policy on the part of the parents. And he honestly believed that his whole course with the boy had been dictated by a true regard for Briar's best interests.

Briar had never been keen on Nash, or Nash on Briar. Mildred allowed her husband to make all the decisions for her, and she blamed her young brother for not giving himself unreservedly into the keeping of Nash. What could be done with a boy who was obstinate and who refused to live with them?

And Briar might not have gone so completely on his

own if he had not had Miss Steadfast as an anchor to windward. But she was his moral support, and in all his struggles it was she he could bank on. If he ran completely out of money, it was not his sister Mildred he turned to, but to Miss Steadfast. He had the comfortable assurance that he would never have to go hungry as long as "Old Steady" remained the city visiting nurse in Finley; and everybody knew that she was a permanent fixture in the town.

The relationship properly began on the day of the tragedy. Miss Steady, as a matter of course, was very busy when the bodies were brought in by the life-saving crew. Her contract with the city did not compel her to be there, but she could not have stayed away.

She went with the boy to Martin Skager's, after he had seen the bodies of his father and mother and the "baby." She had little or nothing to say, for which Briar was grateful; but he was glad she went with him. He had lost much of the confidence of the day before. Miss Steady was fat, like his own mother, and she had the tact not to talk about the tragedy. Intuition told her that was not the course to follow with this boy. She knew from what she had seen of him in school that he would want to taste his grief to the full without interference. But she also understood he was glad she was there.

And later, when he became practically homeless, she took him in. Miss Steady was always doing that. Several times she had played mother to boys who later requited her by getting themselves sent to the Reform School, but she always had excuses for them and she stoutly refused

to become soured by the experience. She was not then living on her little plot of ground near the Big Swamp, but roomed with the Pollocks on Sixth Street. And here she found a little room for Briar. She had a shrewd insight into human nature and she was scrupulous about not interfering with his complete independence. But she found jobs for him, served as his treasurer, helped him pick out his neckties, and fought his battles for him with unscrupulous employers, for he sometimes allowed them to take advantage of him. And always he had the comfortable feeling that she stood in the background — some one he could turn to. And it was she also who, to a large extent, kept him keyed up to his resolve to become a doctor.

Briar's youth was not a happy one. Necessity forced him to do without many things; and Mildred could not supply them to him, because he vaguely felt that any gifts from her would somehow give John P. Nash a certain power over him.

One long winter, when he was compelled to get up at four o'clock in the morning to get up steam for the Wilkinson Dry-Goods store so that the place would be warm when the clerks arrived at seven, his conception of Happiness — with a capital H — was of a life made up of the three- or four-minute periods between the time the alarm clock went off and the stepping-out of bed onto his cold floor.

His quite early decision to be a doctor came about naturally. The work of a doctor seemed worth while to him. There was the amputation of a leg, for instance. It was a tangible, objective, material fact. No illusion about

it. Or the injection of drugs into the system — there were chemical reactions, chemicals of a drug transforming chemicals in the body; more complicated, to be sure, but still "real." He was already deep in the study of chemistry at that time in connection with his delving into geology, and a chemical reaction was almost as real to him as the chair he sat on. Such symbols as H_2SO_4 and H_2O were as alive to him as rabbits in a hutch. With his mind's eye he could see elements of two or three chemicals brought together fight to a finish, and the battle often brought a flush to his thin cheeks. And when those myriads of miniature warriors were arrayed for battle in the stomach or the blood of a living human body, the fight became thrilling. There was no metaphysics about it, or so at least he thought.

He quarreled about medicine with John P. Nash. He was eighteen then and about ready to go to Chicago to medical school.

"You're a fool, Briar, to go in for medicine," the lawyer declared dictatorially.

Briar was always quick to resent even the least suggestion of authority over him on his brother-in-law's part. It was the man's manner rather than what he said that roused the boy's quick temper.

"I'd rather be a doctor and a fool," he shot back, "than a lawyer and a Solomon!"

"*Briar* is right!" was all the man said. Then he resorted to argument.

"Old Wilkinson would give you a good job in his store — grow up with the business and all that sort of thing —

good pay; while in the other you've got to starve six years before you can even begin."

"Well, it's me that'll do the starving." Briar understood well enough that John P. Nash feared he would be expected to help him, Briar, if he went to medical school, that Mildred would be harping on that.

"Of course, but I'm your guardian, you know, and I feel it my duty to advise you."

"But you've now done your duty — you've given your advice."

Something in the flippancy of the tone aroused the lawyer's anger.

"I might do more than give advice," with a gleam in his eyes.

"But I would *advise* you not to try it," with an answering gleam and a faint emphasis on the "advise."

Briar did not know when his interest in the earth and its history began. When he left Finley for medical school he had for years been tramping among the dunes hunting "specimens." He did not at the time pay much attention to the dunes themselves. They were comparatively simple geological facts — no problem about them; extremely young, geologically speaking. They were accounted for fully, and hence they lost much of their interest.

But when he was installed in his little room in Chicago — in a basement, next to the heating plant, which he tended — he discovered that even if he had ignored the dunes, they had not ignored him. They had got into his blood. He was astonished to find that he loved them. And for a time it seemed as if he could not go without them and

live. His never-ceasing nostalgia for them frightened him. He was in constant dread of falling ill, and he could not afford that. He would cheerfully have walked the hundred-odd miles to get to them if he could have afforded the vacation. There was seldom a time when they were absent from his mind.

"I'm going nuts!" he apostrophized himself, stopping short on State Street in the path of a stream of twelve-o'clock department-store clerks.

He walked often to the lake and greedily put his feet in the beach sand. Most of the beach was brick-paved, but there was one short stretch of shore-line in Jackson Park that had been left as the water had been shaping it during a million years. Here he would sit down in the sand and close his eyes. And for a moment the ache of desire for his native dunes of Finley would leave him. But then, when he opened his eyes, he would see the neat gravel paths, the concrete walks, the yacht-club house, and the German building in the distance, and the ache would come back.

Curiously Chicago did not seem real to him. The massive stone buildings of the university, the rumbling, clanging, shrieking elevated trains, the miles of macadam of the Midway, the long rows of apartment buildings with their monotonous uniformity of entrances, the heavy street bridges over which rumbled the trains of the Illinois Central, the automobiles streaming from park to park in long procession, the tower of the White City in the distance with its thousands of electric lights, the crowds of shoppers, working-men, and clerks filling the Cottage Grove surface cars — it all seemed a pageant, insubstantial. And

he did not succeed in throwing off this feeling until he had been in Chicago a year or two; and even then there were moments of relapse into the illusion that everything there was a chimera.

But he could not get back to Finley, not even for a visit. He could not afford it; and at times his longing for the dunes became intolerable. Also there was little opportunity for "specimen"-hunting: a paved street is not a desirable field of operations for that.

All in all he was unhappy with an intensity that is seldom experienced by one with all of life before him. But it never occurred to him to ask if what he was going after was worth all this trouble. The idea of any other profession for him than medicine would have seemed amusing to Briar. Some illusions there were in regard to the profession in the minds of some people, he discovered, but these were rather in regard to the manner of it than about the profession itself. Chief of them all was the illusion of motive. One young fellow, for instance, had persuaded himself that he was going into it "for humanity's sake."

"Like thunder you are!" Briar exploded, and the young fellow seemed offended. He did not give young Quentin a chance to explain. Granted there were generous impulses back of the decision for medicine, that did n't explain anything — did n't explain why medicine "for humanity's sake" and why not something else "for humanity's sake." Briar always suspected cant in such phrases.

He himself saw more fun in medicine than in anything else, a greater thrill — a greater chance, in short, for happiness. And he believed that was the real motive with

practically all the others; and with the lawyers, and teachers, and ministers, and all the others who consciously chose a line of work. He could n't see any particular reason for pluming himself on the choice of any one line in preference to another. They spoke of self-denial. He smiled skeptically. He knew that the alleged self-denial often was a subtle form of self-indulgence. There was his own instance. He could have made out a good case for the self-denial argument, as good as any "medic" in the school or as any "divinity" in that department. He even went hungry sometimes. But he stripped the illusion away. He was in medicine "for the fun of it." He phrased it in this extreme way in reaction against the grandiose pretenses of others.

He made his real mark in nervous diseases. He intuitively understood such deviations from the normal as are present in hallucinations, and it seemed quite natural to him to look at things and events from the point of view of the persons obsessed by them. It was an exciting game that almost made him forget the dunes at times.

And he perfected himself in the technique of hypnotism. He had no illusions about its "mysteries," but he saw it as a handy tool.

"Young Quentin will be heard from," the great Dr. Hazzeldeen, of the faculty, predicted, after Briar's paper on the psychology of the nervous system.

"Like thunder!" said the young fellow, *sotto voce*, and with sarcastic intent, who had informed Briar he was going into medicine "for the good of humanity."

CHAPTER IV

But not many months after he began practice in Finley the truth began to be forced upon Dr. Quentin that the general practice of medicine, as pursued in an average town like Finley, is a business almost as much as it is a science and a profession. Had he but been a "practical" man, in John P. Nash's sense of the word, he would have closed his eyes to the truth and set himself the task of learning how to be a business man. It was not nearly always the best doctors, from a scientific and professional point of view, who were the most successful, he discovered, but the ones who were the best business men; that is, those who were most clever in making people like their personalities. An artificial smile, its artificiality so well concealed that people accepted it for genuine, was sometimes a much better open sesame to success than exact knowledge or even surgical skill. The young fellow who had sanctimoniously assured Briar that he was going into medicine for the "good of humanity," was making a name for himself in his home town in Illinois. He had mastered the art of telling people what they loved to hear; or, rather, he had been born with that art, and he was not conscious of insincerity when he mentally patted people on the back and fed their pet illusions. He had a platitudinous mind, incapable of original thinking; hence he was regarded "safe" and "practical." He made the pleasant discovery that the good of humanity and the good of himself were identical.

John P. Nash set himself the task of advising Briar.

"You ought to join the First Presbyterian Church, Briar," soon after Dr. Quentin's sign had been hung out.

The young doctor looked his surprise. As a boy he had attended with Miss Steady a squat little church in the river section; and he continued, quite perversely, to have a warm regard for the thin old minister whose gaunt figure on the streets of Finley often caused a smile of mild derision.

"Why necessarily the First Presbyterian?"

John P. Nash did not allow his contempt to appear too plainly. Briar had always been a good deal of a fool, and his inability now to see a perfectly plain thing might have been expected. But John P. Nash was determined to be on good terms with him. For one thing, he wanted his wife's only brother to be successful; in a way a matter of family pride, he vaguely accounted for the feeling to himself. But also he valued the good opinion of Hallie. In his mind's eye he saw Hallie take his, John P. Nash's, part against her husband, pointing Briar to John P. Nash as an example to follow. Hallie was young and pretty and full of life; moreover, she had good sense. John P. Nash respected her, and he could never understand what she had seen in Briar to cause her to marry him. He, John P. Nash, understood her, and Briar was not within miles of seeing what a wonderful woman she was. Not that John P. Nash had any vulgar designs on Hallie, even in his own thoughts. That kind of thing would have appeared absurd to him. But he loved to be admired, and he naturally loved it all the more when a young and pretty woman did

the admiring. He was not at all averse to shining before her, even at the expense of Briar, her husband.

Also John P. Nash did not care to have Hallie judge him because of his attitude toward Briar as a boy. By taking a deep interest in Briar's success now he would demonstrate to Briar's young wife that he had always stood ready to aid him, but that it had been Briar who had refused to let him help.

He did not reason all this out. He simply followed his instincts, persuading himself that his interest in Briar was wholly disinterested. . . .

"Why the First Presbyterian?" he repeated Briar's question; "because it's *the* church in Finley."

John P. Nash very reasonably supposed that greater explicitness would not be necessary. Everybody in Finley who was anybody belonged to the First Presbyterian Church. Dr. Bray, who had served the church for years, often patted his congregation on the back for being a force in the life of the community. His was a church of leaders, he said — of "big people," as Bunson, of the "Finley Herald," would have phrased it. It was merely an incident that all the leaders had money, some of it made by their own native ability, more of it descended from the grandparents who had been contemporaries of the lumber king, Jacob Finley.

Dr. Quentin laughed. He understood his practical brother-in-law thoroughly; but he had learned, since the uncompromising days of boyhood, to meet the lawyer's advice with indirection.

"Want me to be in the social swim — for the honor of

the family, so to speak." His eyes were beaming; but Hallie, had she been present, would have felt a certain bitterness back of the words. One part of his mind said that John P. Nash was right; another part vowed that he'd rather be boiled in oil than follow the advice.

"Well, judge for yourself, who are the big men in your profession?" And he enumerated them on his fingers, beginning naturally with Dr. Cody.

"And another thing, Briar," continued John P. Nash, assuming that the church question had been satisfactorily disposed of, "you ought to join a few lodges. They're strong in this town. And it would n't do any harm to hitch up to several of them. No trouble getting in. I can swing a few things" — proudly.

"But I don't give a solitary damn for that kind of thing," with a slight show of irritation; "have nothing whatever against them — fine orders and all that sort of thing; but it would be rank insincerity for me to pretend an interest in them. All right for a lot of people, but I'm not built that way."

Nash smiled. "I knew you'd say that. But you take my advice and be practical. Besides, a doctor does n't need to attend but once in a coon's age. He's supposed to be called away to confinement cases or sudden deaths on lodge nights!" And the lawyer laughed pleasantly at his little joke.

Long after John P. Nash had left him, Dr. Quentin sat with his feet raised to the window sill thinking. There were no patients and he had for the moment nothing else to do.

It was all so different from what he had anticipated. He had expected to work hard, as a matter of course; he had never in his life done anything but work hard. But to his inexperienced student eyes there had seemed to be a straight road ahead. Medicine was an art and a science. And he felt a stir in him to practice that art and that science. He would give it his best, and for recreation he would continue his geological studies. The two had nothing in common, of course, but the latter filled some curious need of his nature. He had a feeling that if he allowed that faculty in him to atrophy, his whole nature would suffer. He would heal people and they would, of course, pay him for it. And he would be on the lookout for cases in his special field — neuroticism, nerve diseases. He would make his mark there, meanwhile getting a foothold in general practice.

But he had not reckoned on the conditions that actually faced him. His best thought, it developed, had to be given to inessentials — how to lure patients into his office, how to keep them, how to build up a practice by scheming to get into the good graces of the "best people." It was all so utterly distasteful to him. Many young physicians doubtless did it as a matter of course, instinctively. Dr. Quentin was not condemning them. They were probably right and he wrong; there was something wanting in his equipment for the practice of medicine. . . .

Going home earlier that usual, he hid his trouble from Hallie. She exclaimed delightedly over his early return.

"Oh, Briar, let's climb the Monarch!" She had the eagerness of a schoolgirl, and Dr. Quentin straightway

forgot his anxieties. He played boy to her girl. He swung his roadster around and dashed off joyously to get a bottle of olives for their supper and some celery for salad.

When he returned Hallie had filled the thermos bottle. Briar cut the meat and bread for sandwiches and spread the slices with butter. Hallie was filling two little jars with potato salad, the while reminding Briar that they must not forget to put in forks as they had done the last time. Dr. Quentin ran to the ice-box for some radishes and fruit. When he had neatly wrapped all that, the hard-boiled eggs which Hallie had put on the stove before his return with the olives, were ready for him.

They worked expertly, without overlapping of effort. And in a surprisingly short time the lunch-box stood ready with the thermos bottle beside it. Briar stowed the two parcels away in the back of the car while Hallie ran upstairs to touch up her hair. He honked the horn a few times, not because he was impatient, but out of sheer happiness. She shook her finger at him gayly from the upstairs window; and when she came down a moment later, her cheeks flushed with the rush and the excitement, he hurried her into her place and perversely ran the car ahead into the garage instead of backward to the street.

"Why, Briar —" she began to protest, but got no further. Without shutting off the engine, he swung to her and his arms were about her. The passion of his kisses left her a little breathless.

He laughed it off as they backed out of the garage.

"Could n't do it in plain sight of the neighbors, you know; and — and — it just had to be done!"

Hallie's cheeks were aflame with pleasure. After months of marriage he was more the perfect lover than ever.

They reached the top of the Crownéd Monarch at sunset. Setting down the lunch-box on the warm sand, they stood for a time hand in hand, now as always when first up there, awed a little by the wonder at their feet.

To the north and east the dunes rose and dipped in irregular sand masses, a tangle of trees and vines and shrubs in the valleys between them. Over the tops of the tall pines they could look down upon the lower dunes with their invariable crowns of bare sand, here and there the top of a dead tree sticking out stark and naked where the traveling dunes had overtaken it and slowly strangled out its life.

Far beyond the lower dunes to the east they could get a glimpse of the Big Swamp with its outer fringe of rich arable land that was hidden from view here, but upon which the sand masses were slowly advancing. The time would come when "Reverend" Joseph Otley's truck farm and Miss Steadfast's little plot of rich muck next to it would be buried five fathoms deep under the sand and when the road to Carcassonne would be compelled to shift to a line farther east its crinkling course among the hills. But before that time should come "Reverend" Otley and his much-tried and patient sister Ruth would lie restful and content in their eternal bed of sand, and even "Old Steady" would have ceased from troubling about the future fortunes of her adopted children. So the sand, for all of its relentlessness, was not worrying any one seriously. Many an onion and carrot would yet be grown on the muck

lands before the sand hills, in their snail-paced migrations, should bury them from view.

To the west lay the lake. In the far distance horizon and water merged, with no sky-line to mark the division. The new Finley breakwater, built but a year or two ago, the pride of the town, lay outlined below them like a pattern on a blue-print. A hundred miles to the southwest, in a straight line across the water, lay Chicago, and even at that moment the day-boat of the Hammond Transportation Line was steering its course toward them, they knew, though it would not come into view until after dark. And all over the broad surface of the water, behind the intangible curtains of the atmosphere, grain boats and iron ore boats and lumber barges and swift passenger steamers and fishing tugs were criss-crossing, they knew, from port to port — from the ore docks of Escanaba in the far north, and from the lumber port of Duluth, or from ports beyond the locks of the Soo, to the greedy maws of Chicago. But for all they could see, the surface of the lake was without life, except for a steam launch that, like a water-midget, as it looked from above, was timidly venturing beyond the breakwater. And for all of the lake's surface placidity, Dr. Quentin knew that in its depths below the eternal war of life upon life was relentlessly going on — the glistening shiner was finding its grave in the stomach of the perch; and the perch in turn had to yield up its body as food for the "sucker" and the carp.

Before Briar and Hallie were through with supper, the long summer twilight was waning. As always at this hour in the hills, there was little speech between them, their

attention absorbed in watching the stars come out in the sky and the lights come out in the city. At the end of the breakwater the automatic harbor-light sent out its intermittent gleam, like a red eye winking.

The lights of Front Street in Finley proper and of the resort section could be seen from where they sat, gleaming brilliantly from across the river. The Hammond Line boat-dock was aglow. In the resort section the Figure-Eight and the Merry-Go-Round were alive with electricity. A low, romantic murmur reached them from the city, and the wavelets from an almost abnormally calm lake lapped mysteriously on the beach below them.

There was dancing in the Big Pavilion a half a mile away, and automobiles were swinging their searchlights over the river. Red lights of launches at anchor dotted the harbor, and the quiet river gave back in legion the reflections of the lights on the shore. The Cascade, the vessel with which the Hammond Line had replaced the unlucky City of Finley, slowly glided, a moving palace of lights, between the piers, and Hallie and Briar watched her fascinated. The steamer announced her presence with a long-drawn-out bass blast from her whistle that echoed low and clear among the hills.

Hallie was searching eagerly for her star. Always it appeared at about this time near the edge of a wide-spreading beechnut-tree that stood at a little distance faintly silhouetted against the sky.

They had made up a story about that star. They pretended they would live on it together some day, a sort of little island in space. And although Briar had teased

Hallie with the scientific fact that that particular "little" star was fifteen hundred times as large as the earth, he took the story almost as seriously as she always did for the moment.

There was a faint smell of smoke in the air. For two days it had hung between the hills and over the water of the lake. They loved it, though they knew that great forests in the north of the State were burning. Men were fighting desperately for their homes and possessions. It was like that almost every summer for a few days in the dry season, the smoke drifting a hundred and fifty miles southward and hanging in the air, thin and acrid.

Dr. Quentin's bitterness had fallen away from him. And Hallie, too, was happy. The spirit of the hills had entered into them. The summer sky was bespattered with stars. They pretended they were not married man and woman, but boy and girl lovers, with the mantle of darkness about them and the reflection of the lights of the town far below them glinting in their eyes. . . .

CHAPTER V

From the very beginning Hallie was slightly suspicious of Briar's passionate interest in geology. She was much more tolerant toward his occasional hunting trips. Those she could understand; the love of hunting was supposed to be native to the average man. Briar took it up because Judge Kester kept two or three rifles always at Carcassonne, and on his visits to the Quentins he induced Briar to learn to shoot at a target. The old man got a great deal of amusement out of displaying his marksmanship.

But Briar's weaponless rambles, alone, among the hills Hallie did not understand. What could they lead to? His interest in geology did not seem important to her, and for a while it was wholly inconceivable to her that it could seem important to him. But a slightly comical little incident taught her that it was.

Miss Steadfast's Jack was eagerly showing her his "collection," assuming an interest in it on her part as lively as her young husband's. There was one rude stone in particular which was the apple of Jack's eye. There was on its surface the faint trace of what might, with a good deal of allowance, be assumed to be the imprint of a bird's foot. He exhibited it as a mother might exhibit her first baby. He even allowed Hallie to handle it, but his eyes never left it, and there was a ludicrous look of relief on his face when it was safely back in his own hand.

Miss Steady's eyes twinkled. She did not take her

adopted son's interest in rocks and "strata" and "dips" and "folds" very seriously; Jack had merely fallen under the spell of Dr. Quentin. Next year it would be something else. She was not blind to Jack's volatile nature.

"That's Mesozoic," she remarked in explanation to Hallie, speaking with exaggerated gravity.

And Hallie did not smile, though she caught the undertone of humor in her friend's voice. And later she described the little scene to Briar, depending on his normally quick sense of comedy to meet her own appreciation of the humor of Jack's over-seriousness on the subject. But Briar took up the story of that stone with a gleam of interest in his eyes.

"Perhaps even older," he said; "birds, you know, antedate man by a good many millions of years. And Jack's 'bird stone' is genuine. There's nothing in my own collection that can begin to touch it!"

And Hallie for the first time understood with amazement that Briar would not have caught the fun in Miss Steady's tone any more than Jack had done.

Later — a good while later — after she had puzzled over the problem a great deal, she asked him: "But what's it all good for, Briar? Why do you do it? What do you see in it?"

There must be some reason. A pose in Briar was inconceivable, and there was not even a suggestion of the futility of the dilettante in him. Hallie had always respected his mind.

But he was unable to give her a satisfying answer. At first he looked blank, as if the necessity for a reason had

never before presented itself to his mind, which it probably had not. Then he groped for an explanation.

"It's so — so tangible!" he managed at last. "You can touch it — no metaphysics — no pretense. It's real." And he smiled his satisfaction at the word. "Real!" he repeated.

And that was all the explanation he was able to give her.

Hallie was vaguely uneasy. Though but quite recently married, she was no longer blind to the fact that the life together of a man and a woman depends for success on very material things often as well as on love. She knew quite well that sentimental people are fond of saying that love is the one thing needful; and she believed that, but she did not believe that love is the only thing needful. She had been a shrewd observer of married people, and she had discovered that marriage was frequently wrecked on financial difficulties. And when she had put on her wedding gown she had determined not only to get married, but to stay married.

And instinct told her that Briar's absorption in something as extraneous as geology represented an element of danger. She did not know exactly in what way; she felt it rather than understood. Friends of Briar's laughed at it as an unusual hobby. But most people had hobbies. John P. Nash, for instance, collected war-tax stamps. Several American and two or three foreign wars were represented in his collection. Hallie remembered that, after all, geology was a science, and she had almost as great a veneration as Briar himself had for science in the abstract. It was always understood between them that he was not merely a doc-

tor, but a scientist as well. There was a big difference, they agreed. Briar was to take his rightful place as an "authority," and both knew exactly what the mental quotation marks meant.

John P. Nash was the first to put into words the vague uneasiness of Hallie's about her young husband's preoccupation with a side issue.

"You can't cash in on it, Briar," he said, after Dr. Quentin had talked enthusiastically for a while about the sedimentary strata of the country around Finley.

Dr. Quentin looked as if he had experienced a chill. So vivid was this impression upon Hallie that, with a secret smile, she half expected he would sneeze.

She came to his defense. "No one cashes in on a hobby." And with an impulse to mild malice — "You don't yourself on your war-tax stamp collection." She rather despised the successful lawyer for this childish foible.

But she had not calculated on how her championship of Briar would affect that young man. There was a flash of very real anger in his eyes.

"Hobby!" was all he said, but the tone in which he said it caused a chill to settle on the little family group in the richly furnished Nash living-room.

Hallie's shot went home, and John P. Nash felt an angry flush gather in his fat cheeks. But by a curious mental twist he turned his wrath against Briar, not against Hallie who was the cause of it.

"The darn fool need n't put on such superior airs," he thought. No one was saying anything and all were conscious of tension.

Briar broke it with a laugh at himself.

"I suppose it does look to others like a fool thing to be interested in."

All felt more comfortable. His sister Mildred smiled pleasantly. Then Briar added, so mildly that even Hallie was deceived by his tone,

"Some people who don't know anything about it might, I suppose, even compare it to —"

But he checked himself in time, and instead of saying, "To collecting stamps," he turned to Hallie with

" — To shooting at targets, as your father's always trying to teach me to do."

But the sudden shift was not lost to John P. Nash. The red flush came back into his cheeks. He who always prided himself on being a hard-headed, practical business man could n't endure the implication that there was something childish about anything he did.

But at that moment the maid entered with the card table, and by common consent the subject was dropped, much to the relief of Mrs. Nash. . . .

John P. Nash had made a good deal of money by being practical, and being practical was religion to him. That was probably the fundamental reason why he and Briar had never got along together. Briar did not accord him, Nash, the respect that his business standing in the community seemed to call for. Important men in Finley, like old Wayne Murdock, of the Belting Works, and Wilkinson, of the Wilkinson Dry-Goods Company, treated him with the warm consideration that he felt was his due by reason of his ability and his services to the town. And as

for Bunson, of the "Finley Herald," he had John P. Nash definitely classed as a "big man." Bunson often referred to him as a "public-spirited citizen," and he recorded Nash's movements so minutely that the lawyer had a number of unavowed enemies who hated him for no other reason than that they were sick of seeing his name in print.

Even as a boy Briar had never seemed to appreciate Nash's importance, and now that he was a man he did n't always take the trouble to refrain from laughing at things said by the lawyer which even Murdock would have listened to with respect and which Bunson would have considered high gospel.

Nash had had half a mind to tell Briar about his resort scheme on the other side of the river among the dunes. He had had a long talk with one S. O. Saxe, who represented a syndicate of Eastern capitalists, and who was inclined to believe the north side of the river could be developed into a summer resort that would pay big. Saxe considered it an ideal spot, being most favorably impressed with the locality near the place where Old Finley, the one-time prosperous lumber village, lay buried under the dunes. If Briar had been a "practical" man, Nash would have liked to talk it over with him confidentially, with a view of "letting him in on the ground floor," if anything came of the scheme. But he decided against it; his brother-in-law was a fool. . . .

On the way home Hallie, who had come to Briar's defense, turned against him and took John P. Nash's part.

"Nevertheless, Briar, he talked sense, you've got to admit that. You *can't* cash in, as he puts it, on your geology."

Briar's arms stiffened on the steering-wheel of the roadster he was driving. For some reason he took offense at her tone.

"Who says I want to?" And in the darkness his voice sounded harsh.

Hallie in her turn felt her cheeks flush. "I suppose you despise success and all that sort of thing — don't care who gets ahead of you."

She had not meant to say it and she did not know clearly why she had put it in that way. She knew she was being unjust, but for the first time there had flooded up in her heart a quick impulse to hurt him.

She did not admit to herself that a taint of envy was responsible for this. The luxury of the John P. Nash home had had its subtle influence on Hallie. There had been a restfulness about it all, a relaxation from a sense of struggle. That sense of struggle, unrecognized until now, had keyed her up to a higher pitch of living than was entirely normal for her.

Briar disdained an answer, and they drove the rest of the way home each nursing a feeling of injury.

Arrived in the garage, when he had turned off the power and the lights, Briar suddenly put his arm about Hallie and drew her to him. And in the darkness she felt his warm lips groping eagerly for hers. She put up her hands to his face and pressed it between them.

But from that moment on Hallie began to regard definitely with slight hostility Briar's "outside interests," as she thought of them. And the feeling grew. They never again discussed it, but instinct led her to adopt an attitude

of mildly humorous ridicule toward Briar's preoccupation with rocks and "strata" and "eras" and "Paleozoic" and "Mesozoic time." And Miss Steady, although not in the least sharing Hallie's almost involuntary hostility, became a strong ally in the struggle. She loved to make fun for its own sake of the over-seriousness of Briar and Jack on this subject, and she seconded Hallie at the slightest opportunity. And Briar and Jack, with defensive instinct, learned to inhibit their enthusiasm when the women were present.

But for Dr. Quentin the feeling was not strong enough to be classed as a mental reservation. He simply could not understand why Hallie could not take such things seriously; but he vaguely supposed, in view of Miss Steady's attitude, that there was something in a woman's nature that made it impossible for her to see the beautiful in something honestly material and nothing more. What little poetry he had read seemed to confirm this: women were creatures made for love, according to the poets, creatures who fed on illusions. He supposed they instinctively resented it when illusions were torn away from things. When they thought about the earth and its history at all, he supposed they loved to think of it in terms of all sorts of pseudo-scientific fairy tales. In those stories man (and woman) had an importance out of all proportion to the actual facts of the case, and doubtless the tearing-away of this illusion was repugnant to them.

Dr. Quentin thought it all out very carefully. He thought he was being very subtle. In reality he did not begin to have any conception of the real facts.

CHAPTER VI

VERY naturally the business men of Finley, especially those from the retail section who saw quite a little of one another, were more or less interested in every young fellow who started in business or in a profession in the town, and they talked him over freely from time to time. A number of them were in the habit of gathering each forenoon at about ten o'clock at the lunch-counter of the Acme Restaurant for a cup of coffee and a doughnut, and it was there that they compared impressions — good-naturedly gossipily — purely for the sake of keeping up a flow of lively small talk.

They were frankly puzzled by young Dr. Quentin. It was not that they disliked him; they simply did n't know what to make of him. He did n't seem to them to be getting on. They did n't know, of course, how extensive his practice was, but they could make a tolerably good guess at it. Young Dr. Washburn was walking away with it all.

"And it ain't that he is n't smart," some one was telling the line at the counter; "used to work in my store Saturdays when he was only a kid, and he was all there, believe me!"

"But he does such darn funny things," some one else contributed. "When he first started in I says to my wife we'd ought to patronize him — good friends of John P. Nash and all that kind of thing — you know how you will feel about such things; like to live and let live and help

your friends; though if it came to a serious sickness I would let friendship and all that kind of thing go to blazes — you know how you will feel about such things —"

The others laughed. Pretty soon he would have himself so involved in qualifications and explanations and mental parentheses that he would n't remember what he had set out to say.

"As I was saying"—the laugh brought him back to his theme — "he does such queer things. The wife had been bothered with headaches, so she decided to have Quentin look her over; he'd been here a year or so. She goes there bright and early, but he never showed up the whole blessed afternoon, and there was five or six others waiting."

"But that happens to any doctor — emergency case," the others defended Quentin.

"Emergency case, nothing — do you know what he was doing that afternoon? I've got it straight — he was out in the river section hypnotizing a dago, Hippiana or Chrispiano, or what was his name?"

"Does he hypnotize?" The others were more interested in that than in "the wife's" headaches.

"Shark at it, I understand. Can put you under by calling you up on the telephone — I'm not saying this myself," hastily, to answer the frank looks of incredulity; "I'm not saying this myself, but I heard it was the honest-to-God truth."

"And did he get our friend Chrispiano under?"

"Darned if I know. Did n't stop to inquire. All I know is the wife was hopping mad when she found out she had sat there all afternoon for a half-loony dago in the river

section. Believe me, no one in my family goes there any more, John P. Nash or no John P. Nash. Though I'll say this much, he ain't a bad sort of a chap when you come to know him. Fact is, I personally rather like him. But the wife!" He made a flapping gesture with both hands to describe her disgust.

A few of those who knew Dr. Quentin somewhat better personally came to know later — much later, in fact — a good deal more about this "dago case" and a small number of other cases like it. Such cases were in fact sprinkled through Dr. Quentin's career in Finley from the very first. The dago for whom "the wife" was compelled to wait was one Tofi Virgo — not Hippiano or Chrispiano. There was a romantic history of some kind back of the man. But because of the clannishness of the foreigners in the river section and their distrust of all persons who asked too many questions, as also because of the difficulty of expressing themselves clearly in English, the straight story of it was perhaps never told. All that was learned for certain was that it began in Italy in a violent love feud in which an abduction and a war with knives were incidents. Tofi was cut in the neck — not seriously, it appeared, and the wound presently healed. He took the girl away to America or else left her to his rival, himself going to America alone — it never appeared very clear which, from the stories that filtered through to the Acme lunch-counter. But no matter which version was the correct one, Tofi turned up in Finley some months later in the Italian colony in the river section, with his memory clean slipped away from him. Did n't know his own name, or where he

came from, or who he was. The Italians knew something about his family back in Italy, it seems, and they took him in. Miss Steady found him one day, and it was she who called her friend Dr. Quentin's attention to the man.

And it was this unknown Italian who caused Dr. Quentin often to neglect his more important patients. He always suffered for it in pangs of conscience afterwards. He knew perfectly well that he was neglecting business for science, but for the time being he forgot all that. The case was such an absorbing one, and it called for the matching of his wits against the wits of the whole Italian colony. He was not definitely Virgo's doctor; he was merely studying him, and he had to overcome the suspicions of the whole clan. And Miss Steady, familiar with his frequent want of tact with pompous *poseurs* whom most young doctors would humor because they were "good pay," was astonished at the pains he took to conciliate the foreigners. All for the sake of getting a good chance at Tofi.

Miss Steadfast, interpreting his motive in the light of her own promptings, ventured to express the appreciation which she felt the Italians should have expressed, but would not: "The Italian Government ought to decorate you and give you a pension for all you are doing for the poor fellow, and all without a cent of compensation."

Dr. Quentin regarded her with astonishment. Miss Steady made her thought clearer.

"Dr. Washburn is always talking about 'service,' and while he's talking you're practicing it."

To her surprise she saw the familiar look of impatience come into his eyes. "Oh, please, Miss Steady, forget it.

Don't make me feel like a fool. It's so nauseating — all this talk of Washburn and some of the others. It's —" He stopped, a look of distaste clouding his face.

"But you are n't talking it."

"But it would be just as disgusting to let you and others talk it for me, without my disclaiming the false pretenses. It's all right when people mean it, but that would n't be my case at all. And I would n't want you, of all people, to have any false illusions about what I am doing. Normally I would n't care a — a — cuss for this Tofi — if he had broken his neck, for instance, in this feud. But his loss of memory is the most interesting thing I've come across since I started in practice. I eat it, I sleep it, I dream it. It's immense. I would n't have missed it for a fortune. It's absolutely a selfish proposition with me."

But Miss Steady was skeptical. "I wish we had more selfish people like that in Finley," she said dryly.

"I'm a scientist, Miss Steady" — and his shoulders seemed to straighten unconsciously — "a scientist, and I hate sentimentalism. It is n't — well, it is n't 'real.'"

Dr. Quentin struggled against his infatuation. That is how he thought of his interest in the Tofi Virgo case — as an infatuation. It interfered seriously with his work of building up a paying practice.

Sometimes this "real" work filled him with so great a disgust with a rather numerous type of patients, whose only ailment was what he described as the "doctor habit," that he would stand in his private office, before opening the door to the consultation room, ball up his fist at the closed door and heap silent imprecations on the unsuspect-

ing heads of the waiting patients, several of whom, he knew, were sure to be what he called "habituals."

He had great difficulty getting opportunities to treat Virgo through hypnotic suggestion. The people of the district were suspicious and he could not afford to arouse their antagonism. Miss Steadfast was all for getting the young doctor some advertising out of the case, but Dr. Quentin put the very reasonable question:

"What is there to advertise? I have n't done anything, and as likely as not I won't do anything — won't get a chance. Besides, I'm not even the man's doctor — merely camping on his trail. What can you make out of such material? Even if I should succeed, Tofi is not the kind of man whose case is noticed."

Miss Steady had no answer. Dr. Quentin looked triumphant, as if he had scored. He was one of the few men to whom favorable notoriety is acutely distasteful.

And the issue proved him right. The Tofi case did not add much to his reputation, though from a purely scientific point of view it was somewhat out of the ordinary. In the end he decided that an operation was the only way out. He was convinced it would succeed. He had studied the man for months, and by means of hypnosis he had temporarily renewed his memories. From his broken English he had pieced together the main points in the story, and he was morally certain he could synthesize the broken threads in the man's mental life.

But for a long time he could not gain the necessary consent for the operation. He could not say that it would not be dangerous, and the man's relatives continued suspicious.

But Briar was patient, and in the end he won. Tofi lived to bless the young doctor for his persistence. He returned to Italy, and a few months later Briar received a badly printed card from him, which Tofi's relatives explained was an invitation to the man's wedding.

Briar had been happy while it lasted; but as for professional advertising in it, there was none. The general run of people in Finley never knew such a man as Tofi Virgo had lived among them. From the point of view of John P. Nash, all the time and effort Briar put on the case were a dead loss. Had Briar cured a cold of Jasper Wilkinson, or relieved Wayne Murdock's hay-fever, it would have been worth much more to him in money and reputation.

There were a few other cases of a somewhat similar nature with which he was identified. Miss Steady soon learned that he could smell them out, and he always went after them eagerly. But almost invariably they were in the neglected districts. And very naturally. Cases of that nature in the well-to-do families were in institutions or under the care of "specialists." The young doctor of questionable professional reputation was certain not to have an opportunity to treat them. He had to look for his material in the hedges and byways, and the material was all too scanty. And what he did find brought him little or nothing. From the nature of the case it would make little impression on Finley; that is, on the people of Finley who counted, and that kind were the only ones who could be of value to a young physician in a business way.

Miss Steady, with kindly intent, did her very best to spread the news of his few successes, but little came of it.

CHAPTER VII

PERVERSELY Dr. Quentin loved to have a fly buzzing about his private office. He knew quite well that it was against the canons of modern medical practice and he understood that the swat-the-fly movement ought to be holy gospel to him. But in spite of all this he liked the low hum of the little creature as it disported itself in the sunlight on the window sill. Not more than one, but that one seemed companionable, even though Briar felt guilty in allowing it to remain.

Dr. Quentin had been practicing medicine in Finley for more than a year. He was sitting alone in his private office. It was a few minutes before the beginning of office hours, and he thought with a slight distaste of the patients in the waiting-room. And the sense of distaste made him feel guilty. This was after all his chosen profession and he should be eager.

Miss Steadfast entered through a private door, dressed in the light blue uniform of the visiting nurse, with white cuffs and collar, and on her grayish hair a little stiff straw hat. As the visiting nurse of Finley, she often had occasion to consult with Dr. Quentin and she often broke in on him unannounced, her nurse's garb sufficient excuse even to the patient, if one happened to be closeted with him.

Miss Steady discussed the adenoids of a little boy in the river section who had fallen down an unused well and had broken his leg. Dr. Quentin agreed with her that it would

be well to remove the adenoids now that they had a chance at the boy. The doctor's eyes lighted up with interest as he talked. He was called frequently to the shabby and rather squalid river section, much too often for his own good, in the opinion of his prosperous brother-in-law, Attorney John P. Nash.

"But it's your office hour," Miss Steadfast, competent and alert, apologized.

Dr. Quentin made a face at the door that led to the waiting-room. Miss Steady laughed.

"Lot of them this afternoon?"

Dr. Quentin shrugged his shoulders. "I have n't looked, but I can make a tolerably good guess. Half a dozen old ladies, both male and female, who have n't a thing the matter with them except that they sit still too much. All that they need is some oxygen on the hoof, but it does n't do any good to tell 'em that. They want medicine, and the best I can say for myself is that what I give them is at least harmless."

The doctor's thin, sensitive face clouded with distaste.

"And there are others, young and old. They come again and again — sometimes really ill, about as often not. And I have to concur in their pet prejudices that there is really something the matter with them. If I don't, I'm a poor doctor. It's a shabby business, doctoring is!"

Miss Steady laughed at him point-blank.

"Show me the business that has n't got a shabby side. Your liver's sluggish this afternoon; I prescribe oxygen on the hoof for *you*, when you've cleaned out your waiting-room."

"And you bet I'll take your prescription — a tramp in the hills to hunt 'specimens.'"

Miss Steadfast shook a mocking finger at him.

"Paleozoic, Cenozoic! You should have lived forty-eight million years ago! But, anyway, 'specimen'-hunting, like your medicines, is at least harmless!" And she closed the door on him, giving him no chance for vigorous dissent.

Miss Steady and Dr. Quentin had reëstablished their old-time intimate relations since his return to Finley. The nurse was no longer in lodgings. She had taken a little house and a few rods of soil on the rim of the Big Swamp. This she had done when she had adopted Jack and Rose. She had mothered other boys and girls, both before and after she had taken Briar under her wing, but she had not felt able to afford the luxury of adopting any until some time after Briar had left for medical school in Chicago. Then she had taken Jack and Rose, of almost the same age — now nearly fifteen.

Dr. Quentin opened the door to the waiting-room, but he forgot to smile pleasantly. He had conscientiously schooled himself in that pleasant smile. It was one of the tools of his profession, he knew quite well. Or, more rarely, a gruff bluntness could take its place. That did the business even better than the smile, in certain personalities and with certain people. If the doctor's general appearance was that of bigness and strength, the gruff manner often worked; but for the slender man with thin, expressive face the smile was easier and more effective, experience had taught him.

But to-day his thoughts were on the "specimens" he

might find among the sand hills, and there was an absent look in his eyes. The doctor's detachment almost visibly communicated itself to the half-dozen or so of patients in the room. An intangible shadow of uncertainty dawned in the faces of some.

"Good Lord!" thought Dr. Quentin, instantly catching the unfavorable reaction, but he did not make the mistake of trying to smile two seconds after the time for it had passed. He looked about the room with a neutral air for the first one in line. A very fat woman, whom Dr. Quentin always mentally called "Man-Mountain," rose heavily from a deep easy-chair.

"Oh, thunder!" he thought as she lumbered across the room. He would have to listen to her troubles for some fifteen or twenty minutes, and there was really nothing he could do for her that she could n't just as well do for herself. He thought of it as slightly shameful to let her think she was not wasting her time and his, as well as her money.

The woman slumped down into the consultation-chair with a sigh of relief, apparently exhausted by the prodigious labor of walking across the room. She spoke with a brogue.

"Ach thear! Ach thear!" she exclaimed. Dr. Quentin could not repress a smile. It was almost ludicrous. If Miss Steady could be called fat, "Man-Mountain" would have to be classified as superfat. But while Miss Steady's every ounce was galvanized energy, "Man-Mountain" had the appearance of wishing for death so she would be saved the effort of getting up from her chair.

It was the sixth or seventh time Dr. Quentin had examined her, and the questions he asked were perfunctory. He knew all about her, but she expected him to go through the whole rigmarole. It could n't do any good, but it was a necessary part of what was described as "working up a practice." He supposed all doctors hated that kind of thing — seeming to be doing something for a patient when they knew it was only an empty gesture.

She was expecting him to give her medicine, while what she needed was instruction in hygiene. But he had tried that in a number of cases like hers — with disastrous results for himself. People did n't want to learn about what they had to do for themselves; they wanted him to give them a bottle of enchanted medicine that would drive all their ills away. And he was uncomfortably conscious of having acquired something of a reputation for being "queer."

"That's what you get for telling 'em the truth," he thought with an impulse to cynicism. . . .

He got her out of the office at last, happy in the possession of a box of big, flat, white tablets to be taken "one after each meal in a half a glassful of warm water."

"I'm a fraud," Dr. Quentin thought when he closed the door on her. It was a bad beginning for the afternoon's work. Stupid cases like that always set his nerves on edge. He simply could not get calloused to them as he supposed all doctors must who wished to work up a practice. There was a devil of mockery in him that sneered at his overconscientious efforts to be "practical," in the phrase of Attorney John P. Nash.

"A fool's dollar is made up of a hundred cents just like a wise man's," was one of Nash's saws. But Dr. Quentin found it hard to pretend to take a fool seriously. And he had learned during the past year that a good many persons, ordinarily intelligent, are fools as to health and disease. It made him impatient. He swore at them under his breath sometimes. . . .

There seemed to be more of that class of patient this afternoon than usual. It was a relief when a man came in whose broken arm had to be rebandaged. Here at least was something honestly aboveboard and objectively definite, with not the least taint of a suggestion of charlatanry about it. Dr. Quentin unconsciously was so cordial and enthusiastic, out of pure reaction, that the patient received the impression his broken arm was an important surgical case. Dr. Quentin heard him in the hall, through the door that had remained slightly ajar, greet a companion:

"Some doctor, you bet! Smart proposition!" The enthusiasm of the voice was spontaneous.

Dr. Quentin closed the door softly.

"That's how I ought to send 'em all away," he thought, "if I really were a smart proposition. But, good Lord!" The exclamation was packed with his sense of disillusion.

He rapidly worked off the patients in the waiting-room. He felt out of sorts. There was nothing interesting this afternoon. He would get through as quickly as he decently could and then go for a tramp in the dunes. That always restored his good temper and took away this exasperating feeling of the futility of everything he was doing.

"Oxygen on the hoof!" He was as much in need of treatment as most of his patients.

There were only three patients left. Dr. Quentin's spirits were rising. Just to discipline himself he would force himself to give those three special attention. After all, this was his profession and he must put it before a pleasure tramp in the hills. He would honestly give those three all the time they required. He would approach the cases as a medical scientist, not as a so-called "practical doctor." He promised himself he would do that if it took till midnight.

And on this thought he opened the door to an unpleasant surprise. Through the door between the hall and the waiting-room sailed Mrs. Duff Powers. She was buried in a deluge of summer furs, and she had the air of an actress coming on stage in answer to her cue. She looked about her in a superior way and after a good deal of hesitation chose a chair. There was a leather rocker next to where an Italian mother and a crying child of three or four were sitting, but Mrs. Duff Powers decided on a straight-backed chair that had the advantage of being across the room from the foreign woman. And the fact was, the woman did not look any too clean. Mrs. Duff Powers turned her face to the window and looked down upon the top of her shiny limousine at the curb. . . .

Attorney John P. Nash, on his way to a directors' meeting of the Farmers' Corn Exchange Bank of Finley, saw the well-known monogrammed car in front of Dr. Quentin's office. He indulged in a low whistle, and passed on with an unconscious feeling of deeper respect for his wife's

enigmatical brother, whom in his heart he secretly despised a little. But when, more than an hour later, on his way back to his office, he saw the limousine still standing at the curb, he made his thoughts almost vocal.

"Young Briar's getting on," he thought. Then by a curious mental twist his attention centered itself on his brother-in-law's given name: "*Briar!* What a name for a twentieth-century man — Briar!" And the knowledge of the fact that it had been Dr. Quentin's mother's family name did not cause John P. Nash to despise it any the less. He thanked God that he was not handicapped in that way.

Reverting back to the limousine: "There's money in her for Briar. Not from Mrs. Duff Powers only, but from her set — if he works it right. But it would be just like Briar to think it his duty to cure her!"

He was still busy with the incident when he sat down at his desk again.

"Milly's funny brother can do it, by George, if he gives his mind to it. He's got looks and an air of distinction — the swarthy-faced young devil — and — and —" He searched his mind for an unfamiliar, to him, word: "temperament," he ended, though the connotations of the term were somewhat vague in his mind.

He folded a sheet of blank paper absently several times, shaping it into a paper boat.

"Briar could cash in on that — looks, temperament, and all that sort of thing — 'specially with this opening. I wonder if he sees how big an opportunity it is for him?" And Attorney John P. Nash decided to make it a point to give Dr. Quentin some brother-in-lawly advice. . . .

Mrs. Duff Powers was a private joke among the doctors of Finley. They had all treated her at one time or another. Illness was a mania with her, and attending to it was almost her sole occupation. Dr. Cody, who was the oldest and best established physician in Finley, used to amuse himself with figuring out what percentage of her life she spent in doctors' offices regaling the physicians with the detailed story of her symptoms. But not even Dr. Cody could afford to treat her with any lack of respectful consideration.

"She cuts too big a swath among the people who have the green goods!" he used to say, with his abrupt little laugh; "and a doctor's babies need shoes and things just like a plumber's."

The Italian's little girl was last in line before Mrs. Duff Powers. The foreign woman looked up with a frightened awe when Dr. Quentin pronounced the stereotyped "Who's next?" She glanced at Mrs. Duff Powers. Dr. Quentin nodded to the mother encouragingly. She jumped up from her chair and carried the crying child into the consultation-room.

Too late Dr. Quentin saw that he had missed a golden opportunity. It was the first time Mrs. Duff Powers had been in his office. Her presence there seemed to admit him for the first time to the circle of recognized physicians of Finley. Mrs. Duff Powers's world had been slow to come to him. Obviously the Italian woman had expected to let the splendid lady go ahead of her. Mrs. Duff Powers would have been pleased. It would have been a good business stroke. But unfortunately he had not thought of it.

And then he went hot with secret shame because the thought came to him now.

"Like a lick-spittle sycophant!" he said, half aloud.

The Italian mother looked up questioningly. Dr. Quentin laughed.

"Nothing," he answered her look; "I was talking to myself."

The little girl was still crying. Dr. Quentin felt in his pocket for a stick of gum. She clutched it in a little red fist, and the unkempt mother smiled fondly. Dr. Quentin asked the little girl what her name was. Encouraged by the stick of gum, she articulated a word that sounded something like "Blip," but he was not sure. And the mother's English vocabulary was so extremely limited that it did not seem to occur to her to supply the information. Dr. Quentin talked to the child a while to pacify her.

He guessed that Miss Steady had sent the woman, and when he mentioned the nurse's name, the mother's face lighted up. She broke into a flood of Italian, accompanied with excited gestures. Then she laughed as she realized it was all Greek to the doctor. But she managed to tell him it was the little girl's throat she had come to see him about.

The case proved unexpectedly interesting. It was difficult to make a thorough examination because of the child's terror of the little electrical device with which he tried to look into her throat. It required patience and a good deal of cajolery, but Dr. Quentin had lost his perfunctory air. Here was something worth doing.

The thought of the waiting Mrs. Duff Powers obtruded itself, but he put it away almost angrily.

"What's time to her?" and he turned with renewed zest to the child. . . .

He looked at his watch in astonishment when the door closed on the two. The case had taken three quarters of an hour. It was long past his office hours.

There was a sharp reaction. He had concentrated too closely on the case. He felt fagged. And instead of his tramp in the hills, he would have to listen to the detailed story that Mrs. Duff Powers would have to tell.

"Who's next?" It sounded absurd, with only one person in the waiting-room. He tried to muster a smile of welcome, but he knew it was not very successful.

"Must have been a serious case," she remarked with a suggestion of tartness in her tone.

Evidently the long wait had not been to her liking. Dr. Quentin felt his temper rise.

"It was," he said, so harshly that Mrs. Duff Powers decided he was not in a mood to be bullied.

And she was determined to indulge in a comforting recital of her troubles. And for that she needed a sympathetic listener. So instinct prompted her not to ruffle any feathers unnecessarily.

It was the first time she had been in the private consultation-room of Dr. Quentin. She made a quick mental comparison between it and the offices of other Finley physicians with which she was intimately acquainted. And she was rather favorably impressed. Dr. Quentin had an unconscious knack of making simple things appear distinguished.

He listened patiently as she talked. His tramp in the

hills was out of the question, anyway. He was determined to be "practical." There was no real sense in listening to all this chatter, but Mrs. Duff Powers was important. She had made herself comfortable in the leather consultation-chair, her summer furs loosely about her shoulders.

Dr. Quentin occupied his hands with mixing something powdery in a little bowl. He often did that when people were over-garrulous. It helped him to be patient, and the professional look of it, he had learned, had a good effect. After they were gone, he usually emptied the powdery mixture into a cuspidor.

He asked a few questions, which she answered eagerly, but when every query only meant a renewed avalanche of words he became wary.

He made all the tests he could think of. Some of them he performed with tongue in cheek. And Mrs. Duff Powers talked on. He felt like a hypocrite, but he was determined to be practical; though a feeling of something like spiritual nausea sometimes took hold of him, he suppressed the desire to swear, and instead made inarticulate grunts in answer to her questions that were mere statements of fact with a rising inflection at the end of the sentence.

The hand of the clock pointed to quarter to six, but he was still at work. Mrs. Duff Powers was obviously enjoying herself. Her enthusiasm about her own case was infectious. It was seldom that a doctor could resist it. Always in the end, against his better judgment, he fooled himself into the notion that her case really was somehow important.

But Dr. Quentin's nerves had been worn thin by the long-drawn-out ordeal of being "practical." The feeling of loathing for the whole business grew. All very nice to talk about a doctor's work in highfalutin phrases — "the healer," "soothing the fevered brow" — this that he was doing was all an elaborate pretense.

"Now tell me exactly, Mrs. Powers" — and he was surprised at the harshness of the tone — "now tell me exactly where it hurts — not what you think the matter is, but just simply where it hurts — definitely."

It was a mistake. He knew it instantly, and under his breath he said, "Damn fool!" But he could not have covered it up now if salvation had depended on it. It was as if another personality than his — or rather than the one he had been masquerading under — had said the words through his mouth.

Mrs. Duff Powers first looked astonished, then suspicious. She spoke tartly:

"My case is not as simple as all that."

Dr. Quentin knew exactly what he ought to say: "Of course not, of course not, Mrs. Powers!" gushingly, and make it convincing by the introduction of a few meaningless medical phrases.

But he could not say the words. He even opened his mouth to try. But he was wise enough to know that the words themselves, without the gush, would be dead. And he could n't manage the gush. So he remained silent.

"Well!"

"Perhaps we'd better leave it here for to-day, Mrs. Powers," he sparred for time, to recover himself.

Mrs. Duff Powers, not without a certain cunning, laid a trap for him. She made her tone the quintessence of candor.

"So you don't think my case is very serious, doctor?"

Dr. Quentin was completely deceived. It sounded so exactly like an honest question. He jumped at it eagerly.

"Oh, no!" and the words rang so true that instantly they made everything else he had said and grunted and looked all afternoon false. He straightway saw his error, and at the same moment he perceived the fangs of Mrs. Powers's verbal trap. But it was too late.

"Then tell me this, please" — with icy politeness — "what causes my heart tremors, my spells of vertigo?"

For a moment Dr. Quentin's eyes burned. It was the tone of her voice that fell on his sensitive nerves like a whiplash. He drew himself up and glowered at her menacingly, but he managed to control his voice.

"I'm a doctor, not a charlatan," he said, and for a brief instant the inextinguishable pride in his eyes cowed her. But only for a moment.

"A doctor!"

The implication of the tone that he was no more than dust under her feet seemed to cause something to snap in Briar. He threw discretion to the winds.

"You want the exact truth?"

"Of course!" Mrs. Duff Powers was determined not to be bullied.

"Well, then, you sit too much and you eat too much. There's absolutely nothing else the matter with you!"

. . . From the doorway Mrs. Duff Powers turned to give him a look that seemed to say he was not there.

CHAPTER VIII

WALKING home from his office in the waning light of day, Dr. Quentin discovered with a little shock of surprise that there was no longer complete understanding between himself and Hallie. He had never been conscious of it before, and he stopped short in the street so that a newsboy took courage to offer him a copy of the "Finley Herald." Although he knew there would be a copy waiting for him at home, Dr. Quentin took the paper, so hopefully pushed into his hand, and absently gave the boy a nickel; and before the urchin could dig up the change, the abstracted doctor was gone.

It would be impossible for him to tell Hallie about the Mrs. Duff Powers episode. A year or so ago, during the early days of their marriage, he would have described the scene unhesitatingly, and not until this moment had he been conscious of having reservations from Hallie.

He stopped again abruptly.

"I wonder," was his whispered exclamation.

The newsboy at last caught up with him and offered him three pennies, hoping that the strange doctor would magnanimously refuse to take them and might even reward him for his honesty with another nickel. But the doctor, with a dazed look in his eyes, accepted the pennies mechanically and slipped them into his trousers' pocket, thereby shattering a bit of faith in another boy heart in the romantic adage that "honesty is the best policy."

Dr. Quentin tried hard to discover when it had first begun and why and how. He had always had such a living sense of mental and spiritual amalgamation with Hallie that their drifting apart was like a disintegration of his own personality.

A curious thought struck him that made his eyes gleam for a moment with interest. He wondered if that was how young Barry Larramore had felt when his personality had disintegrated. It must have been something like that. Barry Larramore was known to medicine as a case of "dissociated personality." Dr. Quentin had talked it over a few times with Dr. Wilmot who had spent several months, about a year ago, at the Larramore Farms, on the eastern rim of the Big Swamp, where old John Wesley Larramore spent a great deal of his time, though his mining properties were in the northern part of the State up in the Superior district. Wilmot had been studying the Barry Larramore case then, and after him there had been other specialists at the Farms. For a moment, as he walked away from the disappointed newsboy, Dr. Quentin had a sense of identification with Barry Larramore. This is exactly how the old millionaire's son must have felt the first time he discovered in himself a double personality.

"Two in one!" Dr. Quentin murmured; then remembering certain well-known newspaper advertisements, he smiled faintly.

Barry Larramore had been *one* and he had quite suddenly become *two* — two minds in one body.

Dr. Quentin's mind, eager though it was for the scent of the Barry Larramore mystery, quite abruptly swung back

to his own affair. The sense of identification with young Larramore fell away from him and he became sharply conscious of his own loss. When had it started, and where, and how, and why? Their change of relations had been so gradual that it had passed unnoticed, until this Mrs. Powers affair had brought it home to him. Something indefinable was going out of their life together, and Dr. Quentin could not decide what it was. And he could not discuss it with Hallie — it was too elusive for words.

And Hallie, well read in his moods, understood immediately that something had gone wrong. But she asked no questions. Faintly offended at his want of candor, she decided to let him choose his own time for telling her about it. And as usual with them at such times, constraint fell upon them and they had little save banalities to talk about. And unaccountably Hallie's coolness roused Dr. Quentin's temper, which was already on edge.

"What the devil have I done to *her?*" he thought angrily, and straightway he apologized for the strong word to the shadow Hallie who was a part of his own identity and who always was present in his own mind as the representative of the real flesh-and-blood woman. And all unconscious of having been sworn at, the real Hallie met his eye with a level gaze from across the table. That look seemed to say, "I won't ask you to tell any more than you want to; I'm a woman, not a beggar," and inextinguishable pride lay in the cold, clear depths of her eyes. Dr. Quentin could not face her look. He felt guilty; why he could not explain. He had an impulse to get up from his chair, walk around to where she sat, take her face between his

hands and kiss her mouth. But he did not stir. And he did not know why he did not act on his impulse. He would have done so a few months ago. But not now. Why?

They talked perfunctorily about the gas-meter, which the company's man had inspected that afternoon for a bothersome leak; but underneath their questions and answers each was busy with thoughts that had nothing to do with what they were saying. And when once his eyes had been opened to the true state of things, Briar learned to look for silent criticism from Hallie. It made him irritable. He broke out into sudden explosions of temper, and Hallie was too proud for tears. She was capable of gusts of passion too, and sometimes they said things to each other that secretly frightened them. And almost always the immediate cause of such outbursts was trivial.

Clashes might have come much more frequently if it had not been for Miss Steady and Jack and Rose. Especially Rose. She "adopted" the young doctor and his wife. Briar jokingly told her she infested his house, but Rose understood Briar. And Hallie. They were both lovely. Rose was highly romantic, and Briar and Hallie came up to her highly colored dreams of what love should be. Rose was small for her age, but she read a great many books; and it was lovely, in her own pet phrase, to come across a young married couple who were as happy and romantic as characters in a book. Though she still wore her hair in a long, heavy, black braid down her back and was only a sophomore in high school, Rose had a lot of ideas about love — not for herself, but just, oh, just in general! And Rose's belief in their happiness had a curious effect

on Briar and Hallie. The girl often shamed them by her mere presence into making every effort to vindicate her faith in them. When she was with them they slipped back, without effort, almost as a matter of course, into the assumption that life is all a beautiful romance.

Rose was lying in bed wide awake. She had just finished her book, and it was grand. She wanted to think about it. It was rather late, and she knew she would be sleepy the next morning, but she did n't care. There was so much to think about, and really people missed a lot by sleeping so much!

Her sleeplessness was the exact opposite of insomnia: instead of counting sheep, she was calling to her aid all kinds of memories to prolong the period of wakefulness. It was pleasant to lie there and just think.

Dr. and Mrs. Quentin's turn came. Why could n't everybody be happy like Dr. Quentin and Hallie? They were lovely — Rose's phraseology. She was almost as intimate with the young doctor as Miss Steady herself. And as for Hallie, Rose was in the habit of kissing her almost as one woman friend another, not as a fifteen-year-old schoolgirl kissing a married woman. Hallie was darling — Rose's phraseology again. And she was so much in love with her husband. It was too lovely. Rose felt a glow of sentimentality warming her whole body. That was the way to love. As a rule Rose thought of married couples with a feeling of something like contempt. They were so prosy and commonplace. But not Dr. Quentin and Hallie. They were the single shining exception in the young girl's mind. She had more than once seen their fingers inter-

locked in the sand on the top of the Crownéd Monarch, when they thought they were unobserved, and when Rose was supposed to be giving all her attention to the lights springing up in Finley across the river. And they went there alone often! Rose's imagination ran riot. They were lovely; and it was lovely to be so happy . . . so happy . . .

Rose's thoughts began to wander . . . She was going to drive Miss Steady's runabout to Carcassonne to-morrow . . . She could drive now and it was lovely to drive . . . She liked to visit the Quentins in their cottage . . . They were so happy . . .

But all the time the relations of Briar and Hallie, almost unknown to themselves, were suffering subtle change. Several times after the disastrous Mrs. Duff Powers episode he tried to tell her about it, but he had always found that he could not. He had felt instinctively that she would not approve of what he had done. For however much of a romanticist she might be up among the hills, Hallie was a complete realist in the prose of everyday life. And though he suffered from it frequently, quite perversely he loved her for it. It was enough for him that it was the real Hallie. She was not pretending. It was her nature to look facts straight in the face, and when those facts were not to his credit, she could not seem to be blind to them. And his passion for reality continued to burn with an unwavering flame.

He did manage to give her a humorous account of "Man-Mountain" one day. She laughed all the more heartily because she read bitterness back of his humor. Things were becoming a little difficult between them, for

no tangible reason whatever, and she tried hard not to increase the tension.

But she suddenly yielded to an impulse.

"Briar, you're not getting tired of your profession?"

Her eyes had gone through quick transformation from laughter to gravity, not unmixed with a look of fear. Dr. Quentin also read criticism in them.

"Good Lord, who would n't, with all the Man-Mountains of this world coming to me!" He spoke irritably.

"That's nonsense, of course; it's the same with every doctor. Everybody has his share."

He could not but admit the justice of this statement.

"Perhaps if you could concentrate your interests more," she suggested somewhat tentatively, not knowing quite how to express what she had determined to say some time — "if —"

But he interrupted her.

"I know what you're going to say: if I could cut out my unprofitable interest in geology and Tofi Virgo and all that kind of thing, and stick to straight medicine, I'd learn to love it."

"Well!" He had expressed it exactly, and she was determined to face it out.

"If I had to do that I'd as lief tie a stone around my neck and jump off the Hammond boat-dock!"

But he was immediately ashamed of having said it. Not because he did not mean it in substance, but because of its flavor of theatricality. Any cheap bounder might have used the same figure. And he was secretly glad that Hallie was not taken in by it.

Her eyes became hard.

"No one can expect to make good when his profession has to take second place for his hobby," she spoke coldly.

It was the first time she had said in so many words that she feared he was not going to make good; and although Dr. Quentin had known for some time that she felt that way, the words themselves seared him.

And she was wrong. His whole being cried out against her indictment. His failure to take hold in medicine was not due to his outside interests. Without those interests he would have been still more helpless. If Hallie could but understand. But he could not explain it to her; he did not understand it himself. It was mixed up with his love for the hills, and his love for the hills was a part of his passion for all that is of the material universe — the rocks, and the sands, and the waters, and the atmosphere that envelops the earth, and the metals in its bowels, and the plants that grow in its thin covering of soil upon the rock layers, and the animals, including man, that feed upon the plants and upon one another. It was exactly because he had a firm grip upon the material and because he was an uncompromising realist that he was able to understand things about the workings of the mind that were hidden from those who did not have their feet upon solid earth. The others had to give so much of their subconscious attention to the position of their feet that there was but little left with which to grapple with the realities back of the material brain.

Dr. Quentin instinctively loved the novels of Dostoyevski. He understood Dostoyevski's mind without effort,

and the abnormal minds of his characters. He had a full set of the novels, bound in light gray cloth, that he had purchased when money was even scarcer with him than it was now, and some of them he read again and again. He loved to take down a volume at odd moments when he was at loose ends and browse through it.

But all this had been of no practical value in his practice in Finley. Beyond the few cases of people in the river section, he had had little work in his special line. He knew that the river section cases had been somewhat remarkable from a professional and scientific standpoint; but the people were obscure, foreigners with no standing, and what he did for them was hardly noticed. There was no advertising in them for him; and advertising, he found, was indispensable to the success of a physician, even though the ethics of the profession forbade the use of the columns of the newspapers. But the frank purchase of space in a newspaper would have been less distasteful to Dr. Quentin than the indirect methods suggested by John P. Nash. The former would have seemed more honest.

He did not know how to take advantage of the accepted methods. To expect it of him was a little like expecting a person born deaf to acquire a passionate love for music. But he sometimes blamed himself bitterly for his inability to be "practical" in the Nash sense of the word. It seemed to him somehow disloyal to Hallie that he was not. He did not understand about himself. He was uncertain, groping about, with the sensation of being in unexplored territory. He was bewildered, and only the hills and what they stood for in his mind were real.

CHAPTER IX

Barry Larramore was sometimes referred to in Finley as "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde." Many of those who used the term were somewhat vague in their minds as to its origin, but they knew the expression well enough from tradition to apply it, at least loosely, just as many persons always call a fisherman a "disciple of Isaak Walton," without being entirely clear whether Walton was a character in the Old Testament or a present-day Alaska salmon magnate. In the main the description fitted Barry. At times he was one personality, at other times another. He was either twenty-five years old (his actual age), or seventeen, according to whether he happened to be "Barry Senior" or "Barry Junior." Scientifically, his case was known as one of "dissociated personality."

But Finley did not concern itself much with the scientific aspect of the case. Only coming into casual contact with him, most people usually judged from surface appearances. They reacted more to the comedy than to the tragedy of the case. Barry was a "queer jigger" — a likable enough fellow and possessed of a certain charm, but a "queer jigger," nevertheless. Barry Senior was somewhat stern and standoffish, with a curious suggestion of brooding misery in his eyes, while Barry Junior was rather devil-may-care, slightly irresponsible.

Finley had long ago learned to make allowances for him, especially after people had obtained some more or

less authenticated facts about the young man's story. The whole Larramore Farms establishment, from old John Wesley Larramore down to the smallest stable boy, was extremely reticent about the matter. But it was known that the "iron king" had spent fabulous sums trying to find a cure for Barry. But there was plenty more money where this came from. The Larramore iron mines that John Wesley Larramore had developed up in the Superior district were considered among the richest in the world, as well as the most famous.

When the well-set-up, muscular young man entered a store, the clerk behind the counter wondered if it was Barry Junior or Barry Senior. But one was never left in doubt. From the very first moment the difference could be perceived. There was nothing tangible to go by; in either case Barry was handsome, fair, well built, masculine without being coarse, easy of approach — but there was a difference that could not be mistaken. If he happened to be Barry Senior at the moment, he was taken seriously, almost too seriously — as one takes a person totally lacking in a sense of humor. People tried to discuss with him the iron market or the famous Holstein herd on the Larramore Farms, of which his father was extremely proud, or the progress of drain-tiling on the Farms, a new experiment that John Wesley Larramore was the first in Cascade County to adopt.

But if it happened to be Barry Junior (in addition to other unmistakable signs, he was certain to show it in a slight halt in his speech that just stopped short of being a stammer; Barry Senior had not the slightest trace of this

lingual defect), people talked bass-fishing to him, or ice-boating, or sailing, or, most frequently of all, girls, with a sly wink of amusement.

Barry Larramore was two separate and distinct persons in one body, and he was treated as two. Barry Senior was not held responsible for what Barry Junior said and did, and *vice versa.*

Each believed he was the real Barry — the Barry who had existed at one time, who at twenty-one had already been the right-hand man of John Wesley Larramore at the Larramore mines. Each was jealous of the other and resented the mental gaps the other caused in his life. These gaps in the mind of Barry Senior, when memory was suspended and when he, Barry Senior, for all practical purposes did not exist, were identical with the emergence of Barry Junior. What Junior did and felt and thought Senior had no recollection of later; and in the same way Senior's mental life was a series of blanks to Junior. Each of them was "dead" a good deal of the time. Senior sometimes "died" for whole days, even weeks, while his body was inhabited by Junior; and then abruptly he would "wake up" to unfamiliar circumstances. Junior might begin a sentence only to have Senior emerge in the middle of it, when Senior would be expected to finish it. Only he would not know what it was Junior had been saying, and an uncomfortable moment would follow.

The first time Hallie spoke to Barry was on the road to Carcassonne. She had seen him a number of times, because Briar was almost fanatically interested in the case, but she and Barry did not have even a nodding acquaintance.

She was out in Briar's roadster, on her way back from Carcassonne, where she and Briar were staying for a short time. The road to Carcassonne, beyond Miss Steady's house, was a private highway. It only led to the Quentin cottage and then ran dead into a sand hill. At the cottage there was just room to turn a car around, but the road itself was too narrow to allow two cars to meet. There were but the two lightly cindered tracks; on each side was loose dune sand into which no sensible driver would venture. But only the Quentins ever used the road.

Halfway to the main road Hallie suddenly threw her weight upon the brakes, and the roadster stopped. The big Larramore Farms car came hurtling toward her. In a moment it came to a stop, the radiators of the two machines almost touching. The man and the woman sat facing each other through the two wind-shields.

Hallie's first thought, as a matter of course, was, "Which Barry is it, I wonder?" He did not leave her in doubt. He looked disturbed for a moment. Then Barry Junior's boyish smile flashed upon Hallie. She acknowledged it with an answering smile.

"The irresistible for-force meeting the immovable wall," he said, rising in the car and speaking over the windshield.

"Which is which?" Hallie followed his cue of banter, and the idea of Briar's flimsy roadster being either irresistible or immovable was incongruous enough to make them both laugh. They were deadlocked on the road to Carcassonne. Passing each other was entirely out of the question.

Barry Junior stepped out of his car and tried the sand with his foot. He came over to Hallie's running-board.

"No go. Serves me-me right for running into this road. Just wanted to see-see what was at the end of it!"

"Like the boy and the rainbow," Hallie suggested.

Barry Junior acknowledged with a quick nod the aptness of the comparison. He admitted with a rueful look that since his curiosity was the cause of the *impasse* his ingenuity would have to find a way out. And the obvious way out was to back up. It was quite a distance to back, but it had to be done.

And as he backed, Hallie's car went forward, very slowly in low. Barry's head was turned back, and Hallie, with nothing to occupy her, could watch the strong body at the wheel, full of vigor, supple. She could safely stare; her own car needed no attention, and Barry was compelled to keep on looking back. But suddenly, on a straight stretch, he quickly jerked his head around and looked full into her eyes. Hallie quickly looked down, coloring as if she had been guilty of rudeness, and Barry's head was instantly turned back to the road again.

Hallie was more careful after this, but Barry apparently was not. At least his car lurched to the side and one back wheel dug its way into the loose sand. The car stopped, the wheel spinning futilely.

"I've done it!" But he did not seem concerned. It was obviously a lark. Hallie immediately accepted it as such. What was the good being serious about it?

They laughed and Hallie climbed out of her car, anticipating a long wait. Barry Junior took his coat off, and

on his knees beside the wheel, became very busy digging at the sand with both hands.

"Like our rat-terrier digging for a-a woodchuck!" he described himself.

Hallie tried to be helpful. She found a piece of board and he laid a track with it to the road. Barry worked expertly, and she could not but admire the quickness with which he took advantage of every gain the car made, inch by inch, out of the feathery bed of sand. A few cinders added here, a stick there, sand packed down with a stone — he knew all the little tricks that the emergency demanded.

"Hope you were n't-were n't in a hurry," he said when all four wheels were back on the road, but there was not too much concern in his voice.

"I was taking medicine from Dr. Quentin to a dying man," said Hallie with a severe look in her eyes.

Then they both laughed, and climbed back into their respective cars.

And when Hallie had finally turned in at Miss Steady's, looking down the road she caught Barry Junior looking back. His car swerved suddenly, but he righted it before it had time to get out of control. . . .

Miss Steady was able to tell Hallie Barry's story. She had learned it from a woman she had nursed, a Mrs. Chase, who had known the family up North. No one at the Larramore Farms ever spoke of Barry's "disintegration," and authentic details were not plentiful in Finley. There was a hodgepodge of legend, but Miss Steady was one of the few who knew the facts.

"It happened about four years ago," she informed

Hallie. "Barry was only twenty-one then, but he was already running a good many things at the mines. He had a genius for figures, Mrs. Chase said, and his brain seemed to be a regular diagram of the complicated system of the big Larramore iron properties. They consulted him whenever there was a point of fact in dispute, and almost invariably he could supply the figures, with date and page; almost never went wrong. His father, very proud of him, called him the 'young wizard.'"

Miss Steady reflectively took a sip of tea from the cup she was holding.

"The old man looked a good deal younger then, Mrs. Chase said. He was a man of vigorous personality, which he still is, but also a good deal of a driver; that got him where he is. Spared neither himself nor any one else. And his hair was still nearly black then."

While now, Hallie knew, it was uniformly gray.

"Barry had been working too hard, Mrs. Chase said, and he decided to leave off office work for a while and learn all he could at first hand about the mines. So he took a drill and went on an underground shift with the others.

"And one day he was caught with fourteen others in a cave-in. You can imagine what old Larramore went through. It took them four days and four nights to dig their way to the shut-in men. It's a wonder the old man remained sane. It killed Barry's mother, Mrs. Chase insists. She lived for ten months after his rescue, but Mrs. Chase believes firmly that that was the real cause of her death.

"Four of the men were dead when the rescue party dug

through to them. One man is now in an asylum. But Barry was as cheerful as if the ordeal had lasted fifteen minutes instead of four nights and four days."

"Barry Junior?" Hallie suggested.

"Perhaps; who knows? Barry himself did n't. Was n't used to the idea then. Could n't conceive of a double personality with reference to himself. If there were 'blanks' as early as this he probably attributed them to the general sense of unreality that was induced by being buried alive."

Miss Steady reflected a moment.

"Besides, it may not have begun as early as that. So far as Mrs. Chase knew, neither Barry nor old Mr. Larramore could tell definitely when they first became conscious of it. It seemed to grow upon them gradually. And for a long time, of course, they refused to believe it."

They discussed the story for a while — idly, with no feeling of any relevancy to themselves in it. It was pathetic, of course, but the situation had its comic elements too. Suppose each Barry fell in love with a different woman!

"Sort of psychical Siamese Twins!" said Hallie, smiling. . . .

CHAPTER X

THERE had been talk of a summer resort on the site of Old Finley across the river so often that the scheme no longer attracted much attention. A year or two ago it had caused a ripple of excitement when "Eastern parties" were said to have looked over the ground. But it came to nothing, and Finley had to be satisfied with such resort business as its own side of the river attracted each summer.

So now on the day when the big story of the "syndicate's" sixty-thousand-dollar sea wall and resort hotel "broke," Bunson, of the "Herald," was in a fever of excitement. His coat was off, and he was so worked up that he forgot to smoke. It was a big thing, by Godfrey; it knocked the socks off anything that had hit Finley for years and years. It was immense — and nobody in town knew about it but he, Bunson (or so he thought). Something seemed to puff up inside of him. His throat was dry with emotion. He mentally apostrophized the blank sheet of paper on his typewriter: when it was filled with typescript it would tell a story that would make even the big men of Finley, like Murdock and Wilkinson and Nash, sit up.

He sat dreaming. Old man Murdock and the others would pick up the "Herald" that evening and the big story would hit them in the eye. For a moment Bunson had a feeling that it was almost disloyal for him not to let Murdock and two or three others on; they were Finley, in Bunson's thought of them, and it seemed a little mean to

take them by surprise. But he choked down the generous impulse.

He recalled the visit to his office of S. O. Saxe of the "syndicate." Saxe was imposing, with the glint of gold in his teeth whenever he smiled, and a diamond on his little finger. He exuded confidence, subtle, contagious. He was obviously a "big man" dealing in "big things." Bunson was always quick to recognize bigness.

". . . And we propose to put up a sea wall that our engineers estimate will mean an outlay of approximately sixty thousand dollars," he said almost casually. Bunson's eyes popped, but Mr. Saxe was not conscious of having created a sensation in the shabby little newspaper office.

But it was a sheer touch of genius, the detail about the sixty-thousand-dollar sea wall. It loomed large in Bunson's story in that day's "Herald." Mr. Saxe was not very explicit about the total of the investment for the entire project. He contented himself with mentioning the fact that it would be a "matter of six figures." That statement, taken by itself, would not have meant much to Bunson. Obviously it might mean a sum ranging all the way from $100,000 to $999,999. But a sea wall of sixty thousand dollars — a mere sea wall! Bunson made some rapid mental calculations. He wondered if he could say in his story, with a big flourish, that it was a "half-million-dollar project." In the end he decided on following Mr. Saxe's cue. He put all the stress on the sixty-thousand-dollar sea wall, depending on Finley's imagination to supply the rest.

"You see, Mr. Bunson," Saxe went on evenly, "it is an ideal spot. I've had it in my eye for some time. You

people have become so used to it that you don't know your own advantages. It's always that way. Perspective is needed — perspective!" And he thoughtfully stroked his hand over his paunch.

"You're absolutely right!" enthusiastically. But Mr. Saxe had the air of deprecating the enthusiasm, and Bunson felt a glow in his cheeks. The earmarks of a "big man"! That kind were always calm and self-contained.

"We shall build the hotel partly over the water, and it will extend back between the two hills. The sea wall will keep the waves in check in storms."

"And of course the hotel will only be a beginning," suggested Bunson.

"Of course," decisively, but in a subdued tone.

"It'll make Finley *the* resort city of the east shore!" Bunson's words were a little thick with emotion.

"Of course." Again that same restrained tone. "Presidents and Senators will be coming here to spend their vacations. The location is ideal. All that was necessary was for some one to discover it. You people could n't be expected to see it; for that you need — ah — detachment."

"Well, they did talk of it a number of times," Bunson remarked.

"Oh, yes, in a small way, but not as the 'West Palm Beach of the Great Lakes' — not in a really — ah — adequate way."

Bunson assented eagerly, not trusting his voice. He was half-subconsciously composing a sentence. Saxe's suggestion about the "West Palm Beach of the Great Lakes" provided the stimulus.

"West Palm Beach of the Great Lakes!" It was immense, by thunder! He could almost see the sentence glowing in his story, as if printed in illuminated ink.

"The hotel and the sea wall and the — ah — their natural accompaniments will be the nucleus for —"

Bunson lost something here. That word "nucleus" did it. For some reason he loved that word, and a sentence insisted on forming itself around it.

" . . . They'll come of themselves," Saxe was saying when Bunson's mind came back from its detour. "It's always that way. Our syndicate had the same experience at West Palm Beach and at Atlantic City and at Long Beach."

Bunson made mental note of the names. They would look well in his story. Mr. Saxe was running on in his quiet way:

"There is no limit to the possible development of the dune section. Of course it's across the river from the main part of town, but that's an advantage for our purposes. It gives a touch of — ah — exclusiveness. And the big people, you know, the really big — that's what they're after. Don't go in for a summer place for mere tinsel gayety. It's exclusiveness they pay for. That's the class we're after. And what do you suppose it will mean to Finley in advertising alone, to say nothing of the money it will bring to the city?"

"It'll be simply immense!" Bunson had not overlooked that feature.

"Imagine, for instance, the President of the United States choosing this for his summer residence! Every morning the Associated Press would flash wires to every

city and town in America, date-lined 'Finley.' And the cables spanning the Atlantic would be burdened with the word 'Finley.' The wires in France and Germany and Belgium and Holland and Russia would hum the word 'Finley,' hum it in strange tongues. It would cross the Pacific and penetrate into Japan and China. For the time being Finley would be the hub of the world!"

For the first time Mr. Saxe displayed enthusiasm. But he became eloquent in a dignified way. It was as if the matter of his talk generated the manner of it; it was somehow appropriate.

As for Bunson, he was delirious. He would reproduce that noble eloquence in his story: "the cables spanning the Atlantic burdened with the name of 'Finley'" — "into every city and town and hamlet, the name of 'Finley'" — "translated into strange tongues on foreign shores the name of 'Finley.'" His mind automatically registered a record of the most telling phrases. It was all an apotheosis of his favorite "Do It for Finley," which was the whole of the Law and the Prophets to him.

He was recalled to his surroundings by the even voice of Mr. Saxe.

"There is some — ah — tradition about the dune section?" the rising inflection making it a question.

Bunson hastily sketched the outline of the story, a little impatient to have to refer to the long-ago. Finley had really been founded on that side of the river. That was in the old sawmill days. It was a lumber town then, and Jacob Finley had set out to perpetuate his name — Jacob Finley, who later went to the Senate, where he was known

as "Old Hale and Hearty," and who in the course of time was gathered unto his fathers, and whose money, made in lumber, was in the still further course of events squandered by his grandsons, who at the present time were mere nobodies in the town — not "big men." And the mill town north of the river had been known in popular parlance as "Babylon," because of its alleged wickedness.

"But the town did n't grow?" Mr. Saxe interposed a question.

"I guess it was the finish of lumbering did it. A lot of people pulled out, and this side of the river was seen to be more convenient to the Chicago boats, and later to the railroad. And the Finley in the dunes petered out. Later 'Old Hale and Hearty' started the Finley State Bank on this side, and by that time it was all settled."

"And the original Finley?"

"Oh, that just simply faded out of sight. For years you could see a part of the belfry of the old schoolhouse sticking out of the side of a sand hill, but that 's all covered now. Nothing left to be seen. Sand got the best of everything."

A gleam of pride came into Bunson's eyes.

"But the real Finley spirit was not to be downed by a sand hill. We sprang to life on this side bigger than ever, as you see."

"But 'Babylon'" — with a faint smile — "'Babylon' lies buried under the sand?"

"Twenty, forty, some places sixty feet deep."

Saxe tapped his finger-nails together.

"'The buried village of Babylon,'" he mused to himself,

as if he had forgotten Bunson's presence; "not a drawback at all, a tradition like that. A fine bit of advertising — nothing crass and common — touch of the romantic. The really big people have a great deal of romance in their natures, you will have observed, Mr. Bunson. The world is built on sentiment."

Bunson's mind was registering phrases again.

"Worth hundreds of thousands to the syndicate, a bit of romance like that — really a big business asset."

Bunson jerked his mind back to attend to the even-voiced sentences. Thunder! Hundreds of thousands for a tradition. And Finley had never suspected it!

"You will be offering a block of stock for sale?" Bunson had to key himself up before venturing the question. His voice trembled a little. Suppose the "syndicate" should decide to keep it all in their own hands. It would still be a big story, of course, but it would not be the same for the Murdocks, the Wilkinsons, the Nashes, and the others. Not that Bunson wanted any stock for himself. He never thought of that. That was wholly beside the point.

Mr. Saxe allowed a long pause to intervene.

"As to that," with great deliberation, "we have given it much earnest thought. And we've come to the conclusion that it would not be right to be selfish in the matter. A town has rights, and there is, of course, a certain advantage in having local people interested. No, on the whole, we are inclined to favor a limited — ah — sharing of the opportunities with you people."

He paused again, calculatingly.

"But I would n't stress that at this time, Mr. Bunson, if I were you — in your story. We don't care to be stampeded."

"Of course, I'll handle that feature carefully — ticklish proposition — understand all that part of it. But no harm in mentioning it confidentially to a few of Finley's big men, I suppose?"

"Well, no," deliberately; "but I fear we could n't possibly let more than a hundred thousand go."

Bunson's eyes popped again, but he managed not to betray himself.

The comment of two men, quite privately expressed, some weeks after the first excitement in Finley had died down, and not reported in the "Herald," is perhaps of interest.

"Reverend" Joseph Otley loved the dunes, and the building of a summer city there seemed to him a desecration. That fact may have incubated the words:

"Finley on that side of the river was once overwhelmed by the wrath of the Lord, and the same God still rules!"

That was all. People could make what inference they pleased.

Martin Skager was the other whose remarks are worth record:

"If they build that hotel between them two hills, they're a bunch of nuts!"

That was all. He spat a squirt of tobacco juice over his nets into the loose dune sand. People could make what inference they pleased from his words.

CHAPTER XI

THEY were not getting anywhere. That is how Hallie often phrased it to herself, and Briar was also acutely conscious of it. He was hanging on, that was about all he could say. And that was the end of their grandiose dreams. Perhaps it was better, after all, to fool one's self with all sorts of illusions for the sake of becoming a "success." If he could have persuaded himself that he was doing his work "for the good of humanity," he would not only probably be making a lot of money by now, but he would probably also be making a success in his profession; and as a practical thing he would be doing a lot of good. He would be able to give Hallie the things she deserved.

Again and again he tried conscientiously. But the Mrs. Duff Powers episode was typical.

And there was often a curious questioning look in Hallie's eyes. Oh, they were happy, they loved each other of course, but —

The fact stood out that Dr. Washburn, who had entered practice in Finley nearly a year later than Dr. Quentin, was carrying everything before him, even getting important patients away from such long-established doctors as Wister and Cody. Washburn was a "coming man," all agreed. Already he drove a shining, high-priced coupé, while Dr. Quentin went to see his patients in a battered roadster of ancient model. Dr. Washburn knew the importance of "front." It was good business, and he was a business man before he was a doctor.

"He's grabbing off everything in sight," John P. Nash often complained to his wife, Mildred — "everything Briar should have grabbed, but did n't. He's smart, Dr. Washburn — not uppish like Briar."

Mildred sighed. Her own boys were looking forward to high school. Would they have as hard a time as Briar after all that studying?

Briar and Hallie never spoke of Dr. Washburn. Neither one of them could have uttered his name; it would have been a physical impossibility. Both felt they would choke if they should try. That was the worst of it. If they could only have discussed him it would n't have been so bad.

But John P. Nash had no such scruples about the man he looked upon as his brother-in-law's rival.

"If you'd only followed my advice, Briar, you'd have a better practice than young Washburn. Between me and you, Washburn is n't as big a man as he looks. I'd hate to trust my family to him. But he knows how to put his best foot foremost. He's practical — that's the whole story."

Dr. Quentin had nothing to say. There was no defense that John P. Nash could understand.

"He's public-spirited, Dr. Washburn is. You can't get anywhere these days without being public-spirited."

And the lawyer wondered why Dr. Quentin laughed. Nash had been absolutely serious, with not the slightest flavor of ironic intent. He did not understand irony. "Briar's so damned mysterious," was his mental comment on the laugh.

"And it's a snap, Briar — a regular pipe," he warmed to his theme. "Maybe you think it would take a lot of

time. But you're absolutely wrong. Take this bright young Washburn. I've heard him make at least a dozen speeches — at picnics, church suppers, before the Civic Club, at school gatherings, and what not — and every last one of them was one of two speeches. He's got two of them — canned speeches. One's on 'Coöperation' and the other's about 'Service.' And one or the other of 'em always fits. He throws in a little story about a nigger or an Irishman, or pays the chairman a neat compliment, and the trick is turned. Before you know it, he's reeling off one of his speeches, and people think he's a heller. And between me and you, Briar, most of these talks you hear are something like that. But Dr. Washburn gets advertising out of it, believe me! His 'Coöperation' and his 'Service' are worth a dollar a word to him every time he spiels 'em."

He paused, not certain whether Briar would resent what he was going to say.

"You ought to go in for that kind of thing, Briar — Service. It's a kind of trade-mark of the time. You are n't in it if you don't join in. And Coöperation — everybody 's talking it. Not but what I think it's all right," he hastened to add, "but you need n't lose sleep over it because you don't mean every comma and period of what you tell people. People like it, so why not kid 'em along?"

But Briar felt more amusement than resentment.

"So according to your diagnosis I don't keep up with Washburn because I'm a poor kidder?"

John P. Nash smiled. That was about what it amounted to.

"You've got to be practical — have an eye to the main chance. Take me. I'm making money, but I capitalize my advantages. There's this resort hotel business. All Finley is crazy about what it will do for the town. You remember how the 'Herald' played it up when it first broke. Bunson had everybody from the President to the Mayor of Kickapoo coming here to spend the summer. And I'm boosting that kind of thing along as hard as anybody. And why? I'm public-spirited. Of course I am. Want Finley to grow and all that sort of thing. But besides, I'm in on that hotel deal. In helping Finley I'm helping myself."

The hotel deal had in fact made all Finley crazy. The business men at the Acme lunch-counter always referred to it as the "syndicate project." Almost every one of them had "grabbed" some of the stock that had been reluctantly placed on sale by the "syndicate." The sixty-thousand-dollar sea wall would be going up soon, and the hotel would be ready next season. It was not as large as they had in imagination pictured it, but that was probably because they had formed too extravagant notions from Bunson's too highly colored stories. Besides, resort profits were enormous — if the right kind of people came; and the "syndicate," with its long-established connections in West Palm Beach and Atlantic City and Long Beach, would see to that. And the other side of the river would soon be booming. Many had invested in real estate there, their lots located against barren sand hills, the site of which had been purchased *en bloc* by the "syndicate" and parceled out to the Finley investors. Millionaires would be crying for them as soon as the "syndicate" got

into its stride. And all talked "syndicate" with one voice — enthusiastically, eagerly. Besides, they were doing it for Finley, the biggest little town the Lord ever made, by thunder!

But instead of giving his time and energy, like the rest of the practical, sensible men, to projects like the "syndicate" plan that would help make Finley grow, or instead of improving his opportunities like Washburn, Dr. Quentin put in a good deal of time exploring geologically what he and Jack Steadfast always referred to as "their gully" — a sudden, inexplicable gash in the earth between two hills, not far from the Crownéd Monarch and almost within sight of the "syndicate's" new hotel grounds. Some fifteen feet deep at some points, it was much shallower at others. Its sides were steep, and they were most fascinating to study. Dr. Quentin and Jack took infinite pains to clear away the vines that trailed over the edges and down to the bottom. They laid bare the stratification of the rocks and engaged in endless speculation about the reasons for the gully.

For there was no reason for it on the face of it. The gully was a freak, a sport of nature. There were evidences that at one time ("In the Paleozoic Era, thirteen million years ago!" Miss Steady made fun of them, overhearing their talk) — that at one time a swift current had flowed at the bottom of the deep, narrow passage. But at present the gully was dry, serving no purpose, with no reason for its existence.

"Used to be a water-course," Jack Steadfast explained to Hallie; "probably drained part of this territory then.

But some other stream came along, worked its way slowly, century by century, to the sources that fed our gully and stole its water. You know, rivers and streams do that. Regular thieves!"

He was quoting Dr. Quentin, and he was so deeply in earnest that Hallie did not have the heart to laugh; also, here in the dunes, this subject that so absorbed her husband and Jack seemed somehow less unimportant than it did in Finley, where the obligation to be "practical" seemed always to be pressing down on one.

"Thieves!" Jack repeated almost vindictively; "there are rivers that reach out over to three or four others and take their water from them — leave them dry and useless."

"But it takes them a dozen millenniums to pull off such highway robbery." Jack did not notice the gleam of mirth in Hallie's eyes.

"Of course," he said earnestly; "such a thing takes time."

He studied a rough diagram he had made of what he conceived to have been the probable original course of the gully when it was a deep, narrow cavern of a river "a dozen millenniums" ago.

"But it's possible, Mrs. Quentin, that it was n't a case of robbery at all with our gully. It may be that a number of our sand hills just simply walked over the little river and choked it."

That was Dr. Quentin's theory, and Jack was still quoting him. The hills in their infinitely slow migrations had filled the narrow cut through the earth and had compelled

the water to find its way to the lake along some other course.

"But this little stretch was left somehow useless now, with no reason for its existence — like a — like a — "

He searched his mind for a simile.

" — Like an appendix in a person's body. It was probably protected by just the right angle to the lay of the land. But some day some Lake Michigan tornado will come along from just the right corner and blow a couple of million of tons of sand into it, and that will be the end of our gully."

He sighed. The gully for the moment was dear to Jack's volatile heart, and its imagined "death" was almost like a personal loss.

The "syndicate" was building a concrete bridge of a single span over it. Not because any one needed to cross the gully, but in the opinion of the "syndicate" it would look picturesque to have the cavern spanned. It gleamed white and stark amid the vines and moss, standing out in ugly prominence, like an artificial tooth in a row of natural ones. Dr. Quentin called it a crime. But he more than half agreed with "Reverend" Otley that the whole "syndicate" project was a crime.

"I would n't grieve about it too much, Jack," Miss Steady advised him dryly; "your gully may not 'die' for another thousand years."

"It may not," and Jack seemed to be seriously hopeful; "but you never can tell. If conditions should be just right, a sand hill might step on it and choke it in a day."

"We'll all go to the burial service," Hallie laughed.

And Jack, catching her play on words, abandoned his serious mien and laughed with her. . . .

John P. Nash sometimes talked to Hallie.

"Why not let Mildred and me put you and Briar up for the P.E.O. Card Club, Hallie? I'll work the wires. I'll get you in if I have to pry some one else out."

Hallie was genuinely grateful. It was a big order he was taking on. To get into the P.E.O. was not easy, especially for a penniless couple. If it had been easy, the letters could not have stood for "Protect Each Other." Only people who counted in Finley were admitted to the P.E.O.

"But it would n't do," she demurred. "We could n't — well — afford it, I'm afraid. I don't mean the fees and all that, but it would mean ever so many things — clothes, evening clothes, and all that."

"Of course, you'd have to put on some front," Nash conceded. He knew the P.E.O. Club well enough for that. Hallie could n't help smiling.

"I'm afraid Briar would n't feel — well, natural, if he tried to pretend he was a lot more prosperous than he is. And I'm sure I should n't," she added quickly, fearful of seeming to place the responsibility for the refusal on Briar.

John P. Nash was frankly puzzled. He could n't quite get that point of view. Why, damn it, that was the game! If you were really prosperous, you did n't need to put on "front"; you could afford to seem to be no more than you were, or even less. But when struggling, you just had to put on "front." They all did it. He knew, believe him, he'd been there himself!

"It's a confounded shame!" he said to himself, "that

Hallie can't have what she wants. Briar ought to get a hump on him."

Every time Hallie and Briar came back to their somewhat smallish home after visiting the Nashes, Hallie felt blue. John P. Nash had a year or two before built himself an imposing house, and he had not spared expense in its appointments. Not that she envied the Nashes their house. It was no case of sour grapes when she assured herself she would hardly have taken it for a gift if compelled to live in it, and that her father's little cottage in the dunes was far more synonymous with "home" than this place could ever conceivably become.

But it stood for something. In a way it expressed its owner. It meant at least achievement of a certain kind. In her own mind she kept clear of the word "success" because of the almost purely financial connotations it has acquired. But achievement! The key-word of her life! Success in the restricted sense was included in it, but was not all of it. She was beginning to fear that she and Briar were doomed to be mere trailers, hanging on to life, as it were. It was intolerable.

And Briar at such times felt depressed for days. Women loved beautiful things, beautiful clothes, a beautiful home. He could read it in Hallie's eyes, in her silences, in her periods of gloom. And, after all, she deserved it a thousand times more than any other woman in Finley.

CHAPTER XII

THINGS went a great deal better during the time while Hallie was waiting for her baby. They succeeded in recapturing the early sense of *abandon* in their love for each other. It was as if they were on a vacation and had agreed to postpone until their return home all considerations of the routine matters of their lives. They were not getting anywhere — never mind, that matter could be taken up and disposed of at the proper time. It was not to be allowed to cast any shadows now.

At odd moments the comedy of it made Hallie smile — looking upon her period of waiting as a vacation! And being happy in the love of her husband in the care-free mood of a honeymoon! It was at variance with all the correct etiquette of child-bearing as she had come to be acquainted with it in novels and from the talk of other mothers. She had always been led to believe that it was a "difficult period," and mentally she had seen Briar in the rôle of the young husband who, on the doctor's advice, was more than ordinarily gentle with his wife's whims. And Briar was a doctor himself. He would know such things without being told. Hallie had been ready to resent such factitious gentleness and to ward it off by letting her ironic humor play on it.

But the "difficult period" never arrived, and Briar had no opportunity to bring into play whatever qualifications he may have had for the rôle of the considerate young

husband at such a time. He was riotously happy — not fatuous because of the coming baby, but because the vacation spirit had hold of him and made him forget the wreck of their dream of achievement.

He did not think much about the baby; he could not make himself feel that exultation that is by common consent taken for granted in a youthful husband. He knew perfectly well that many people sentimentalize over this event because they are ignorant of the physical processes. All this talk of a halo about the head of the expectant mother was acutely distasteful to him. Whether or not it meant anything depended so much on the mother.

He got along better in his work. Everything did n't seem so horribly permanent. If there was an unusual run of "Man-Mountains" or Mrs. Duff Powerses who ordinarily would set his teeth on edge, he was even capable of telling Hallie about them. Such a bit of professional bad luck was not without its comedy, and it was rather fun to have Hallie laugh at his inability to play a part convincingly. It was n't as if it had any serious meaning for him. They were in an interim. If things went wrong, well and good; it was only for a short time. What was the difference? He was going to make the best of his "vacation," and the devil take the hindmost!

They were conscious of the humor of their attitude. Briar loved to be in the kitchen with Hallie while she was at work. He stood leaning against the door jamb talking nonsense, and Hallie was laughing. She loved his light play of humor; it made her feel so free and irresponsible. After taking a look at the potatoes on the stove to see if there

was enough water on them, she came into his arms, insinuating herself into them because he was pretending that he did not see her. They laughed.

She put up her hands to his smooth forehead and manipulated the skin into corrugations. And she pretended annoyance because the "wrinkles" would not stay; they were erased as soon as her fingers were removed. She instructed him how to keep them there by raising his eyebrows. Then placing an index finger at each corner of his mouth, she drew his lips down.

She regarded him critically.

"That's the way you ought to look at such a time as this — forehead wrinkled with care, corners of the mouth drawn down — weighed down with the care and responsibility of becoming a father!"

Her eyes were laughing into his. He could hold the pose no longer. The "wrinkles" came out and the corners of his drawn-down mouth slipped up from under her detaining fingers.

Hallie protested that now he had spoiled it all and that he was n't at all like a responsible man of family any more, but like a boy in love for the first time.

Briar repaid her in kind.

"And you ought to be sitting in slippered ease talking goo-goo stuff: they always do on the stage and in novels. Motherhood is always sentimentalized, though why it should be it's hard to see: it's one of the most honest things in nature."

He regarded her quizzically.

"I'm afraid, Hallie, you would n't be considered a suc-

cess in your present rôle by the stage and fiction mothers —not at all slushy enough. Think of it—instead of sitting in romantic ease with a figurative halo around your head, you're in your kitchen prosaically boiling potatoes for —"

But she did not let him finish. With a quick, panicky wrench she broke out of his arms.

"Good Heavens, the potatoes!" One leap brought her to the stove. The cover clattered off the pan.

"Boiled dry!" Her dismay was genuine.

"But they've got to be dry, anyway, before we can eat 'em," he suggested reasonably with no humorous intent.

Hallie laughed. "Wait till you try to eat them." She made a face indicating the taste of salt on her tongue. "We must all learn by bitter experience." And she shooed him away into the other room, to give her an opportunity to finish the preparations for dinner with the efficiency expected of a woman three years married. . . .

It was Hallie's wish that the baby should be born at Carcassonne. And her wish on this point was, of course, law. Briar objected that it would be more sensible to go to the Finley Hospital, but Hallie was not to be persuaded.

"For others," she said, "not for me."

And although he continued to point out that at the Finley Hospital there would be every convenience, while at Carcassonne the conditions were almost primitive — heating water on a cook-stove, for instance, first getting it from a well out of doors, kerosene lamps instead of electric lights — he understood her whim. The hospital was, of course, much the more sensible place, but all considerations of convenience were more than counterbalanced

by the fact that her father's cottage in the dunes was the place where they had been happy. There they had taken seriously their dream of achievement that had meant happiness — the first year. Hallie wanted to be happy at such a time; it seemed the baby's due. And she knew she could be completely happy at Carcassonne without effort.

For both Briar and Hallie felt that an indefinable something had gone out of their lives in the house in Finley. They could not give it a name. Sometimes they thought of it as romance, but that was not quite true. They loved the hills, and home seemed to be among them. They understood each other at Carcassonne; there was no sense of hectic strain there. The calm of the dunes seemed to enter their hearts there.

Ways and means were simple. Hallie's father and mother had permanently abandoned the cottage, although it always was in readiness. During the past three years the Quentins had gone there with increasing frequency for a day and a night sometimes, for week-ends, to spend holidays. They were being secretly laughed at by such of Finley as took cognizance of their movements. Could anything be more quixotic than to spend Christmas, for instance, in an isolated cottage away off in the dunes, away from the cheer and the glow of the city — nothing to do, nowhere to go, no excitement? They must be a pair of queer birds to have tastes like that. The legend of their flights to Carcassonne was not without its effect in working against Briar's success as a physician. People looked askance at him; they did n't know what to make of him any more than he knew what to make of them.

But the important point for Hallie was that they had been happy there. They had a feeling of being safe at Carcassonne — though safe against what they did not understand. But when Briar was busy with a novel of Dostoyevski, of which he kept a full set there, or with "specimens," or with medical journals, and she was at work on one of the many things that must be done continually in the primitive conditions that obtained at Carcassonne, it was no effort to be happy. They were connected with Finley by telephone, and Dr. Quentin could be reached for professional services. But even the fact that he was not called often, sign and token though it was of his failure in his profession, did not seem as hard to bear at Carcassonne as it did in their house in Finley. Something of the care-free spirit of the savage entered into them among the dunes.

Hallie's baby was born the second week in May. It lived only five days. The baby was a girl, but to Hallie and Briar it would forever remain sexless. They would always think of the child as "It."

CHAPTER XIII

Almost from the day the "syndicate" hotel opened, Finley felt there was something wrong with it. People could not exactly lay a finger on the trouble or say in so many words what it was, but the impression was unmistakable that there was something. Those who had put money into the venture were not boasting of it as much as once they had done.

An appreciation of the true state of affairs came to the Finley business men gradually — very gradually. Having hard-earned dollars tied up in the scheme, they were rather anxious to feed their hopeful illusions about the project. And those dollars were going to help them win other dollars. There was hardly any one in the retail business section who did not have in his safe the deed to one or more lots in "New Finley," as the site of the future resort city across the river was popularly known. Once it had been "Old Finley," but that ancient sawmill village under the sand was forgotten — like an old friend who has been twenty years in the grave. And now "New Finley" was to rise above the very housetops of the old village; and when the "syndicate" should bring its millionaire summer residents to the place, all would dispose of their lots against the sides of the sand hills at a profit of three hundred per cent.

They all laughed a good deal at "Reverend" Joseph Otley for his denunciations. Otley had protested against

the scheme from the very first day. He had acted on intuition, not on logic or reason. The whole thing would come to a bad end, he had declared with conviction. And when any one pressed him for a reason for this extraordinary opinion, he merely tumbled his long, curly gray hair, looked at his questioner keenly with his sharp fanatic's eyes, and said, "The Lord will bring it about!"

And Martin Skager, overhearing this pronouncement of his old friend, would spit twice, roll his quid from one cheek to the other, let the humor of his old gray eyes play on his auditor for a moment and observe dryly:

"Maybe Reverend Otley's had a private conference wi' the Lord an' knows all about his plans, but if 't was me, I'd say I'd be a damn sight more scairt of a November storm. — I watched 'em build that sea wall," he would add significantly.

"Reverend" Otley was not a minister, at least not now. There was a tradition in Finley that he had been a regular clergyman years ago in Ohio or Kentucky — the versions varied. But almost as long as most of the younger men in Finley could remember, he had occupied the little truck farm next to Miss Steadfast's place. He lived there with his rheumatic sister Ruth serving as his housekeeper. He was understood to be an authority on Revelation. He knew all about who or what the Seven Beasts were. He had an infallible interpretation for the Seven Candlesticks. Such passages as, "And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword," were as clear as the sun to him. Wags sometimes amused themselves by committing unusually obscure

passages to memory and then later accosting "Reverend" Otley on the street to demand their elucidation. And he was never too busy to comply. He would stop in the middle of the sidewalk and give his exegesis with an air of conviction that never failed to impress his auditors for the moment at least. Not infrequently a little crowd would gather to listen, and "Reverend" Otley, with sweeping gestures, would direct his words to all who cared to stop. He never went to church, holding that all churches had departed from the early Christian ideals and practices.

He was a vegetarian and a sworn enemy of tobacco. When Martin Skager saw him coming, the old skipper always quickly put a fresh chew into his mouth so he would have plenty of juice to squirt about him during their talk. For the two were great friends, in spite of the difference between them.

While the hotel and the sea wall were building, Finley business men sometimes quoted Otley: "The Lord will bring it about," they said facetiously, thinking of the three hundred per cent profit which the "syndicate" had intimated they would make on their lots. At the very first they boasted a good deal about their investments. Each was under the impression that only a chosen few had been "let in" on the deal. But it was not long before everybody understood that the chosen few included nearly all of them. That was the first slight rift in the lute of their exultation. Bunson, of the "Herald," continued to sing the praises of the "syndicate's" enterprise, but after a little some of the others were sufficiently disillusioned so that they could

begin to make fun of the editor's almost fanatical enthusiasm.

"Every time the pile-driver puts down a new concrete 'pile' in the sea wall, Bunson writes an editorial about it," they laughed.

"And every time a carpenter drives another nail, he prints a cut showing how the hotel looks now," said another.

"And every time a member of the 'syndicate' steps off here for a look, Bunson next day has the President and the King of England and a dozen Senators and Dukes coming here to make this their summer home," scoffed a third.

And there were a few of the more conservative who quietly — almost secretly — unloaded their lots and even their stock in the hotel company. They were not spreading it abroad. They did not want to hurt the project. They were not knockers, not they; they were boosters! But by dint of much comparing of notes, several had come to the conclusion that the "syndicate" was building the hotel and sea wall exclusively with Finley money, and that it had made a big thing out of the sale of lots against the sand hills, without investing a cent of its own. It was business, of course, and the hotel would be a big thing, but — but —

In short, they needed the money in their businesses, that's why they unloaded — a few of them. And they usually did it through their friend and legal adviser, Attorney John P. Nash. He was understood to be buying for other parties — for the "syndicate," some said — but the conservative business men of Finley did n't care what

he did with the lots after they had exchanged the deeds in their safes for hard cash.

And the few who had "got from under" secretly exulted that they had done so when, soon after the hotel opened, it came to be known in Finley as "Monte Carlo." No one could say where or why or how the name originated, but it was openly said and believed that the place was all that the name implied. And the business leaders of Finley were respectable men — members of the First Presbyterian Church, many of them, or of other equally respectable though less imposing churches. They had reputations to maintain for being honorable and respectable and law-abiding. They would not have liked to have their names connected with "Monte Carlo."

And those who had not unloaded were not as eager as they had once been to tell of their connection with the project.

"Damn it all, why don't they do something?" they sometimes asked in confidential tones, but they did not exactly know what they wanted done or who the "they" might be.

Nor was there much except street gossip to go on. And a prosecuting attorney is not likely to be too nosey in the affairs of a business enterprise in which the "best people" of a community are stockholders and which is being lauded day after day in a newspaper which, by its own admission, is nothing if not public-spirited. A prosecutor and sheriff have election day to think of, and it is sometimes desirable for them to be a little blind.

And a good deal of money was being spent in Finley that

would not have come to it but for the "syndicate" hotel. The place did attract persons who seemed to have money. It was noised about that fortunes were lost and won there in a single night in a certain secret room equipped with a roulette wheel. But that was probably mere gossip, the project's well-wishers said. If it was a secret room, how did every Tom, Dick, and Harry not only know about it, but know exactly what was in it and how well it was patronized nightly? And a good deal of the small change from those mythical fortunes dribbled into Finley cash registers. The people who came to the hotel for their summer outings were liberal spenders. They did not "bite a penny in two," a saying Finley merchants had in regard to some local characters with plenty of money in bank. The "syndicate" people believed a business man was entitled to a fair profit, dammit, and you had to take off your hat to them. That was more than many local people were willing to allow a man. Finley was not disposed to be too critical about where the money came from or whether "Monte Carlo" was really what the name indicated. That was none of anybody's affair, at least none of the affair of those who had "unloaded."

But whether or not it could legitimately be considered his affair, "Reverend" Otley made it his. From the beginning he had been frank about saying that he did not want a resort town built on the site of "Old Finley." He loved the dunes and he did not want their peace turned into a modern Babylon. And the buried sawmill village was a clear warning, in his view of the case. The place was not meant to be a town site.

"It was all foretold in Revelation," the men at the Acme lunch-counter joked; "the horns of the Seven Beasts had something to do with it. And the Four Horsemen will put the kibosh on 'New Finley,' according to Otley!"

But no amount of scoffing could turn Otley from his purpose or dampen the ardor of his denunciations. He took to preaching again, holding beach services in the resort section of Finley proper. The regular resorters knew Otley; he supplied many of them each summer with vegetables from his little truck farm. They were ready to listen when he appeared on the beach to address them. It was not hard to attract a crowd.

Standing on the little platform on which the band boys gave concerts, the waves lapping the beach at his feet, bathers disporting themselves in the water or in the sand, girls in gaudy sport dresses promenading along the concrete walk with bare-armed, coatless boys, "Reverend" Otley fixed the few people about him with his piercing eyes, and punctuating his sentences with lunges with his long, thin arms, he hurled denunciation at "Monte Carlo."

"The Lord will visit it in his wrath!" he shouted, his eyes aflame. "He will utterly destroy the den of harlotry and money-changing! He will turn the fires of his anger against it, and it shall be even as Sodom and Gomorrah! The place where it stood shall know it no more forever!"

The fire of the fanatic was in his face. It was patent to all who listened that he believed to the bottom of his soul every word he uttered. He thought he was being used as a mouthpiece. His sincerity and conviction were almost terrifying. A few smiled; others there were who shuddered a little.

"Forever's a long time," observed Martin Skager in an undertone to a man standing next him. "An' I'll bet the place will know it, though it won't show up so perk as it does now in its new paint. But at that, Otley ain't so far off. I watched 'em build that there sea wall!"

And he strode away, pursued by the shrill voice of the speaker, who was saying something about Jericho, whose walls had fallen to the sound of the trumpet and upon which the Lord had laid a curse, forbidding its rebuilding. The implication, not expressed in so many words, was that a similar curse had been laid on "Old Finley" when the sand hills had buried it twenty feet deep and more, and that those who were trying to rebuild it were flying into the face of Almighty God. It was clear that he believed that firmly and that all his denunciations had been based on it from the very start. The address created something of a sensation in Finley. It was discussed up and down the street on Monday morning.

"It's a damn shame to allow anybody and everybody to slander a business enterprise like that," some one at the Acme lunch-counter protested. Many nodded approval; others smiled — those who had "unloaded." The man who voiced the protest was known to be "in deep."

"Why don't they do something about it?" he demanded. "It's slander, pure and simple, — calling the place a brothel and a gamblers' den. Where has he got his proof, I want to know? Let him produce the facts. Put up or shut up, that's what I say," and he struck the counter of the Acme Restaurant belligerently. "It's murder, I tell you, plain business murder. Are we going to stand for that?"

The "Finley Herald" on Monday night burned with indignation. Bunson called loudly (in black-face type and capitals) upon "the traducer of the fair name of Finley" to stop his slanderous libels. He mentioned no name, but there could be no mistake as to who was meant. His anger was "righteous wrath" (he so described it himself). Loyal men and true, men actuated by the boosting spirit, men who loved the fair name of Finley, men who stood for the spirit of progress, men who helped all good causes with money and service — big men, true men — had risked their cash in a business project purely as a matter of civic patriotism, to help Finley grow, to help carry its name and fame to all parts of the land, and here a nobody who never invested a cent, never gave the town a boost, slandered it without let or hindrance. Was that justice, was that fair play?

Bunson hung over the forms while the paper was being made up. He could see the black-face and the capitals sprinkled through the body of the type. His eyes were burning. He gloated over the sharp phrases. Each capital-lettered word was like a stab driven home by him, Bunson, into the body of that damned Otley. He rolled the phrases under his tongue with the vindictive air of an avenger who plunges the knife into his victim saying,

"There, take that, and that, and that!"

Yet Bunson did not have a cent invested in the "syndicate" hotel and he had not bought a single lot against the sand hills. But he felt the holy anger of one whose own good name has been assailed by wicked slander. He "did it for Finley." Bunson was like that.

CHAPTER XIV

The death of "It" marked the beginning of a new phase in the life together of Briar and Hallie. Not only did it mean the end of their "vacation," but it definitely meant the end of the period of illusion.

Hallie was the first to face it squarely. She was up again and as full of the vigor of life as always.

"What's the good, Briar, of keeping things from me? You don't fool anybody by it but yourself."

"Keeping things from you?" Briar was genuinely surprised; he had not been conscious of it, or, rather, he had become so habituated to the thought that he must not let Hallie see his failure that he no longer thought of it as hiding something. His great love for her burned with as fierce a flame as in the first days of passion. She was the central fact in his life — "real," with a burning intensity that made all other realities mere shadows.

Observing other men, he sometimes despised himself for his devotion to a woman. The markedly successful men had no such preoccupation. They loved a woman, perhaps, loved her devotedly and cleanly, but she did not preoccupy them. They were capable of forgetting her. They had work to do, and it so absorbed them that they forgot her very existence.

But however they might fool themselves, Briar knew that they did not go into the hurly-burly primarily to express their love for wife and child in a practical way, as

they pretended, but because they loved the hurly-burly itself. It expressed them and absorbed their vitality. The woman and child were but incidents. Oh, they were kind to them and indulgent and they loved them, but they thought of wife and child as belonging to them; never of themselves as belonging to wife and child. The struggle of life which their souls craved and were absorbed in had their choicest thoughts; the left-overs were for the family.

The "vital" men would never recognize this picture of themselves, Dr. Quentin knew. They were as much given to fooling themselves as is all the world. Like the boy in the medical school who was going a-doctoring for the "good of humanity," these "dominant" men plunged into the struggle for all kinds of factitious reasons, while all the time the real reason was that they loved the fight.

"But they get somewhere, by thunder!" he exclaimed sometimes, "while I —"

He hated pretense. He hated all things that were not "real." Reality was the aim and goal of his life. He was expert in stripping away illusions; but in gaining clarity he seemed to lose force. He was not getting anywhere. Practical men *did* first and then invented reasons and excuses; they covered whatever was naked and unlovely in their actions with beautiful illusions. Not insincerely. They themselves were the firmest believers in the illusions they created. In that lay their strength.

But for Briar Hallie was not an incident. He needed her. There were times when he despised himself for it. Observing the self-confident airs of other men, it seemed a weakness. If he were possessed of enough personal force, he

would stand alone spiritually as other "strong" men stood alone. He would bring her the spoils of battle, but he would go into the battle without her, not needing her, not wanting her. . . .

"Keeping things from you?" Hallie saw instantly that his surprise was genuine. Her tone became imperceptibly softer.

"I know you are n't conscious of it, but the effect is almost the same as if you were. You don't tell me things any more."

"There is nothing to tell." But as he said it he knew it was not the truth. And as always there shot through him a flash of admiration for Hallie because she did not accept the bare statement on the face of it, allowing facts to be glossed over.

"Oh, yes, there is, and you know there is. If you were deeply interested in your work, you'd tell me about it. You'd be always telling me about it. You could n't help yourself. There is always plenty to tell — little trivialities, perhaps, but big in total."

"Good Lord, Hallie, don't I get enough of that at the office, and must I make myself a bore at home?" Though he admired her straightforwardness, he was irritated by it at the same time. At a less emotional moment he might have laughed at himself for this conflicting attitude.

"Not a bore, Briar — it would never be boresome to me." Hallie refused to lose her temper, all the more because she saw that Briar was unstrung.

"But me" — biting off the word. "Think of lowering your mind all afternoon to the level of all the stupid moun-

tains of flesh the Lord has allowed this old world to be infested with, and then coming home and talking about it till bedtime; forgetting it in sleep for a few hours, and then beginning all over again. Ugh! It's nauseating. It's — it's —" He searched for a word, but not finding the right one — "it's damnable!"

Hallie smiled at his heat.

"But it can't be all like that, Briar," she said reasonably. "There must be interesting cases among the uninteresting. And there's drudgery in everything."

And he knew she was right. He admitted that, taken all in all, there were a considerable number of somewhat interesting cases.

But his mind craved more than that. His intellect wanted an opportunity to function, and it could not do that in a vacuum, as it were, on stupidities like the Mrs. Duff Powers or the "Man-Mountain" type. His mind wanted to "bite into" something. At great intervals it got a chance, as in the case of Tofi Virgo and a few others. He did not himself quite understand that he was possessed of very special powers and that all his dissatisfaction arose from the fact that he could not bring them into play. He was a deep-sea fish confined in a bowl.

Many doctors, not so handicapped, searched out and found in their profession the mental contacts that brought them joy of the work, and they succeeded where he failed; and incidentally they helped to lessen human pain. Dr. Quentin did not recognize it as such, but he had what an artist or a poet would have called temperament. The

artist would have capitalized it; for Dr. Quentin it was a stumbling-block.

"We've been drifting," said Hallie quietly; "and we have n't been getting anywhere. I'm ready to take my share of the blame. We shall have to start anew. I wonder if it is good for us to stay here at Carcassonne. Of course, we're happy here, but is n't it — is n't it — how shall I say it? — I mean something like debilitating?"

She sighed. After the death of "It" they had stayed on at Carcassonne. Their house in town now had another tenant. When they went back in the autumn they would have to find new quarters; and they were happy here, in spite of the specter of failure that hung like a shadow over them.

"Nonsense!" Briar spoke more positively than he felt. Though he did not clearly understand the reason for his inability to take hold like other practical men, he understood what were not the reasons; and Carcassonne had nothing to do with it, any more than had his greedy interest in geology.

He wondered how Hallie felt about "It." They never spoke of the subject. The baby had been buried in their souls as well as in the earth. His own attitude Briar had made clear to himself soon after the simple funeral rites had been performed. He had not seen enough of the child to have formed a real attachment for it. He did not know how other fathers felt; they were popularly supposed to have a deep love for their baby even before it was born. Briar frankly doubted it; he suspected that it was one of those perhaps unconscious poses that people love to be-

lieve genuine emotion. But whatever might be true of other men, he told himself frankly that he had not had any real love for "It." He had pitied the poor little thing, clinging to life almost desperately from the beginning, but love — there had been no time. And he could not mourn for it with any genuinely deep sorrow. It would have been a pose if he had tried, and he would have despised himself for it.

A week or two after the baby's death John P. Nash had spoken to Briar on the subject.

"Mildred and I and the children sympathize most deeply with you in your great sorrow."

And Briar had suddenly yielded to an impulsive burst of impatience.

"Oh, for Heaven's sake, John P., there's no sense in acting a part; my heart is n't broken or anything of the kind. I hate this posturing, doing what people expect you to do."

And then, instantly sorry, he had apologized to John P. Nash. After all, the man's motive had been kindly. Briar regretted the baby's death keenly, but to be forced into posing as one whose heart has been lacerated by the loss of a week-old child, with whom he had not had time to get organically affiliated, was extremely distasteful.

But he could understand how Hallie might feel deeply torn by the event. She had had the child so much longer than he. Doubtless she had learned to love it. But she had never said a word about it, steering carefully clear even of allusion to it.

And he deduced from her silence that she was blaming

him. In what way, he could not exactly tell. But he had not been able to save the life of his own child. She would feel that that fact somehow put the seal upon him as a failure as a physician. Of course, Dr. Cody, who had been called in, had also been helpless. No human power could have saved the baby, Dr. Quentin knew, and if he could only have said this in so many words to Hallie his mind would have been at rest on the subject. But it was a physical impossibility for him to open his mouth to speak about "It." He could not have pronounced the significant pronoun.

She would be saying to herself: "He's a failure; couldn't even save 'It's' life — a failure!"

He cried out against the injustice of it, but a mother could not be expected to be just at such a time.

At other times, when the peace of the dunes seemed to have entered their hearts and when something of the old dream of achievement flushed them with hope, he called himself a fool for having attributed such thoughts to Hallie. At such times he remembered her clear-eyed sanity, her common sense, her habit of looking facts in the face.

But he felt guilty none the less whenever he went into the dunes on a "specimen"-hunting expedition. It was as if by reason of the death of the baby he had no right to indulge himself in his passion for geology. Wholly preposterous, but he could n't shake off the feeling. Hallie, he knew, regarded his geology researches with a sort of instinctive hostility. She seemed to hold them, or rather the impulse toward them, to blame for his failure in medicine, not understanding that the impulse was a manifestation of the

deepest need of his nature — the need for "real" things. He did not understand this himself, only felt it.

He came quite abruptly to the conclusion that he must break away from Finley and from the dunes. He must try for a place in an institution, some sanitarium for neurasthenics, or some place where they concentrated on mental or nervous troubles. A general practice was not suited to him and he was not suited to it. He was a square plug in a round hole.

He would make a radical face-about. He would get into touch with the great Dr. Hazzeldeen; Hazzeldeen had always predicted great things for him. He would be on the lookout for a place where his special aptitude for a certain kind of work would have an opportunity to function. He and Hallie would begin anew their journey on the road to Achievement. He promised himself he would make everything up to Hallie. Their dream of Carcassonne would yet come true.

He became optimistic, in sharp rebound from the months of depression that had weighed him down.

"Good Lord!" with almost boyish enthusiasm, "we are n't octogenarians. Hallie's only twenty-five and I'm twenty-nine. We're young, young!"

All the world seemed before him, and he whistled "My Bonnie" out of tune. He would say nothing to Hallie now about his plans, but he wrote to Hazzeldeen immediately. He was eager to set the wheels in motion. It would be a wrench to break away from the dunes, a wrench for Hallie as well as for him, for both loved the hills; but one had to be practical in this world. Through Hazzeldeen he would

get into some big institution. He would work hard. He would give up geology; he would sacrifice all he valued most. He would make himself the "authority" Hallie had dreamed of. He would win back her respect, and in the far future they would come back to Carcassonne in the dunes.

He would win Hallie back — completely, all of her. Passionate worshiper that he was of "real" things, he could not endure a mere semblance of love and respect from her. He needed all of her. Life without that would not be worth while. So-called "strong men" would doubtless despise him for that, but he did n't care. He was glad he needed Hallie. Though married to her, he did not have her now — not the real Hallie. But he would move the world to win her for his own.

CHAPTER XV

JACK STEADFAST was, of course, a great friend of Martin Skager, as Briar had been before him at the same age. No boy living so near the fisherman could resist the fascination of Martin Skager's fishing tug Marie. Jack had made one trip to the fishing grounds. He had been compelled to stretch the truth to the breaking point to induce Martin Skager to take him. Miss Steady was afraid of the water, and it had taken casuistry of a high order to interpret as consent what she had answered when he had asked permission to go.

And now he was in semi-disgrace with Martin Skager, because Miss Steady had protested to the fisherman for his taking the boy along with him. With fine loyalty Martin Skager had shouldered the blame and had not revealed to "Old Steady" that Jack might be considered to have taken liberties with exact truth. And Jack stayed away now from the tin-roofed cottage, being a little ashamed to face Martin.

And it was during this interim that he discovered Barry Larramore; that is, Barry Junior. Jack had never thought of him before as a possible companion. Barry Larramore was a man of twenty-five and rather imposing — not jolly, like Martin Skager, or full of curious information about familiar things like Dr. Quentin.

But now, thrown on himself by his self-imposed banishment from the Martin Skager haunts, he wandered across

the Big Swamp to the Larramore Farms. Jack was one of the few who could cross the swamp without getting wet — except his feet, which did n't count!

He struck up an acquaintance with old John Wesley Larramore, and inside of a week he had become an enthusiast on mining, losing his interest in "specimens," as well as in the fishing business which had for a while seemed fascinating. And, curiously enough, he and Barry Junior became friends through the old iron king, not the other way round. Barry had taken to sailing, and Jack helped him. Incidentally he made his peace with Martin Skager by asking the old fisherman to give him and Barry Junior the benefit of his expert advice on how to handle Barry Junior's new boat.

But above all else, he wanted to go in for mining now. He tried to get Barry Junior to talk about it, but Barry had nothing to say.

Jack began to complain at home that it was a waste of time to keep on going to high school (he was struggling along as a freshman), since he was going to be a miner anyway — up in the Superior district in old man Larramore's mines.

"But I want you to be a big man in whatever profession you go into, Jack," Miss Steady demurred; "and for that you need training. Look at Barry Larramore. He did n't go into the mines at sixteen — first to college, then an engineering course in the State School of Mines."

"Yes, and look what's come of it!" Jack knew he was being unfair, but he desperately needed an argument.

"You ought to be ashamed, Jack!" But Jack knew that Miss Steady was trying hard not to smile.

Jack was n't so sure about the so-called "Barry case" after he had known Barry Junior for a while. Of course, Dr. Quentin took the case very seriously, but Jack was inclined to think Barry was putting on. He tested him out, but not subtly enough. Barry had had too much practice in quick mental gymnastics, as a result of sudden transformations from one Barry to another, to be caught by Jack's comparatively obvious trap. Barry Senior had had carburetor trouble a day or two ago. The next time Barry Junior drove up with the big Larramore car, Jack asked innocently:

"How's your carburetor working?"

Barry Junior blinked, for the fraction of a second bewildered. Then his mind, trained to such emergencies, automatically made the necessary deduction: as Barry Senior he must have had carburetor trouble.

"Fine as silk-silk now," he said positively. He had learned to lie glibly whenever the necessity arose. "Got it fixed up same day-day. Worked like a charm ever since."

Then, to make it more convincing, "Took it up to Nasby's garage. That man Nasby-Nasby's the slickest mechanic in Finley. You tell Miss Steady if she ever gets trouble-trouble, to go to him. He had that carburetor humming in fifteen minutes!"

It was so well done that Jack was more than ever convinced that there was n't as complete a separation between Junior and Senior as there was said to be.

Barry Junior soon became great friends with the whole Miss Steady family. The big Larramore car was often

standing in the yard of the cottage, and Barry took Jack and Rose and Miss Steady out in his sailboat on the river. In spite of his physical maturity and his twenty-five years, there was an air of irrepressible juvenility about Barry Junior. But sometimes, when he had been amusing Jack and Rose as Barry Junior, Barry Senior suddenly "emerged." The result was always rather painful. He would look at them searchingly with his grave eyes, with a suggestion of temper in his bearing, as if to say, "What the devil do these two children think I am, a rah-rah boy?"

It was Rose who first brought Barry to Carcassonne. She succeeded in creating the opportunity after some maneuvering. She knew Dr. Quentin's passionate interest in the case, and Hallie also had talked a good deal about Barry, whom she had never met. It would be in the nature of a triumph for Rose to introduce him to Briar and Hallie.

She prompted Miss Steady to ask her to take a message to Hallie.

"I'll drive-drive you over," Barry Junior offered.

Rose demurred. She was fond of driving Miss Steady's runabout. Besides, it would n't be quite the same. Rose wanted to engineer the whole thing, not be a mere passenger.

"I'll drive-drive *you* over," she countered, imitating the slight catch in his speech.

"I'm on!" he cried gayly, and the two of them made their way to Miss Steady's garage.

When they arrived at Carcassonne Hallie was on the porch sewing. Rose waved gayly from the car as soon as she had brought it to a stop, and Barry had an impulse,

imperfectly repressed, to raise his cap, but he remembered in time that he was bareheaded.

Rose introduced him a little proudly. Hallie could not repress a faint smile at the schoolgirl's naïveté. A gleam of fun came into her eyes.

"The irresistible force being introduced to the immovable wall!" she laughed.

Barry had an answering laugh, pleased that she remembered him. Rose looked disappointed.

"Oh, you have met!" she complained. The thrill had gone out of it for her. Hallie reassured her.

"No, we did n't, Rose — not 'met'; Mr. Larramore merely tried once to run over my poor little roadster with his big car."

The incident was convenient. In five minutes they were like old friends. Barry was so obviously pleased and Hallie was so lovely about it — Rose's words — that Rose's sense of triumph at having engineered the meeting returned. She wished Dr. Quentin were present too.

Hallie took on a tone of light banter. That seemed appropriate with Barry Junior. It was like talking to a boy.

"Jack and Rose and Miss Steady have done nothing but talk about you for weeks, Mr. Larramore, so that I was wild to meet the celebrity face to face. And here he is at Carcassonne."

Barry was flattered. He blushed boyishly. It was plain to be seen that he was immensely pleased. To be praised even at second hand by a beautiful woman was like wine to his senses. Moreover, this woman was mature, that was something. In Barry Junior's thought of it, it was like a

boy of seventeen receiving attentions from a woman of twenty-five, though in reality Hallie's age and Barry's were about the same. Besides, she was a married woman. It was a new experience for Barry Junior. It was somehow a little exciting, and the flush in his face remained. He was enjoying himself. He made a mental resolve that he would come to Carcassonne again. He blamed himself for having overlooked the place until now. After all, you could have a lot of good times if you knew people, and he was going to see more of Mrs. Quentin.

Barry Junior was not good at repartee, and he found nothing clever to say in answer to Hallie's banter. But he laughed good-humoredly.

"Queer name-name, Carcassonne," he remarked, taking up her last word. Then, evidently fearful of giving offense, "Nice all right, but so unusual. Never heard it before."

"French," said Hallie.

"Honest?"

Hallie laughed. He said it with so much eager interest as if she had said something thrilling when she spoke that one word "French." Barry Junior, she decided, was determined to be pleased. He was going to enjoy himself and he was determined to show her that he liked her. The boy — he seemed like a boy to her — unquestionably had charm. He showed an eager pleasure in ordinary trivial things.

"French poem," she explained, not because it made any difference, but merely to keep the talk going — "by Nadaud; I used to be sentimental about it when I was a girl."

Rose laughed.

"When she *was* a girl!" — in a pretense at an aside to Barry.

Hallie was thrilled more than she would have cared to confess. It was as if a weight had been taken from her heart. The frank admiration of this well-set-up boy, his fair hair rumpled by the wind, the assumption on the part of Rose that she was young and a girl in spirit and appearance though a wife in name — it made her feel like a girl, the depression that she had been laboring under lately dropping from her. Her cheeks were flushed. She felt a hunger and thirst for gayety — a dance, perhaps, with gleaming shoulders flashing in brilliant lights; evening clothes of men resplendent amid rich surroundings; diamonds and pearls; cut glass on refreshment tables; palms and flowers; wide staircases; polished floors. She had taken things too seriously of late. It was nonsense, all this depression. She imagined Barry Junior in evening clothes. He would make a striking appearance. His odd look of a man-boy was charming.

"So when father built this cottage here I named it 'Carcassonne.'" She ignored Rose's remark so as not to betray the curious emotion it had evoked.

"Great stuff!" Barry Junior was enthusiastic.

Hallie laughed. It seemed so easy to laugh. Also it was so patent that her explanation of the name of the cottage meant little to Barry Junior. He was enthusiastic because he was determined to be pleased at anything she might say.

"It was silly," she said, "and does n't really mean anything."

But this, she knew, was untrue. Carcassonne by any other name would not have been Carcassonne. In reality she thought of all other names of summer cottages as silly.

The subject of swimming was mentioned.

"Do you swim-swim, Mrs. Quentin?" Barry wanted to know.

But Hallie had never learned. She could splash about in shallow water, but she had never gone in for swimming.

Barry seemed pleased.

"Oh, but it's lots of fun," he assured her enthusiastically. "You miss half your life-life if you don't. Honest you do, Mrs. Quentin."

He was very earnest about it as if it was important.

"Mr. Larramore won a swimming contest last year," Rose contributed.

Barry seemed surprised to hear her speak. He had the air of having forgotten for the moment she was there.

"Marvel piled on marvel," Hallie chaffed him; — "'and still the wonder grew that one small head could carry all he knew.' Neither Jack nor Rose ever opens his — her — I mean, his or her mouth without telling me something new you are noted for."

Barry seemed slightly embarrassed, but pleased too. He was obviously not unwilling to shine as a swimmer before Hallie. But his pleasure was so genuinely boyish that the display of it was rather charming than otherwise.

"You must learn — simply must."

"I'm old and decrepit." Hallie put on a long face of exaggerated seriousness that made Barry laugh boisterously.

"I'll bet-bet you're seventy-eight," he chaffed her in turn. The little catch in his voice was delightful, Hallie decided.

"And therefore full of wisdom. Age has its advantages, Mr. Barry."

He plainly thought it very funny. But he returned to the subject in hand. Swimming really was the greatest fun, he assured her. And it was so simple. You simply could n't sink when you once had got the hang of it. You just stayed afloat of yourself, without thinking. And it was ever so much better sport to go into deep water than stay near shore. To ride big waves was really living.

He became eloquent on the subject, displaying as much enthusiasm about swimming as Jack ever did about "specimens" or about the fishing business, or latterly about mining.

"I'll teach-teach you, Mrs. Quentin," he offered suddenly, and when she demurred, he insisted. He was determined to carry his point. He simply could n't think of having her continue longer without being versed in the art of swimming. And living so near one of the finest beaches in the world. It was preposterous. He became very earnest, so that Hallie felt herself carried along by his eagerness, almost forgetting that she was not really taking him seriously.

She consented at last to let him be her swimming master. Perhaps he would not come to Carcassonne again soon, and if he did she would put him off. She had no desire to learn to swim. She had always been afraid of deep water.

But Barry Junior suggested a date on which to begin the lessons, and when he and Rose had driven away in Miss Steady's runabout, Hallie appreciated with a feeling of amusement that he had maneuvered an invitation out of her to visit Carcassonne again.

He had shown by every word and gesture and look that he admired her. It was as if he were lacking in the normal inhibitions that would otherwise have hidden from her much of what he felt. He showed in his face and words and manner many things that others succeed in veiling from view. It was amusing when she thought of Barry Junior only and kept out of mind the other Barry. And that was rather easy to do. He had been clever about winning that invitation.

"He's bright enough," she decided with a smile. And she felt light-hearted. She simply could not think of Barry as pathetic.

On the way home Barry Junior could not repress his enthusiasm.

"She's fine!" he burst out.

"Of course she is," Rose agreed heartily. "I always told you she was."

"But you never said she was like that!" The way he said it would have provoked a laugh from Hallie, could she have overheard it. It was as if he were blaming Rose for having kept very important information from him.

He returned to the swimming. He described to Rose how he would go about the job. He was highly intelligent on the subject. Barry Junior was at home there.

And when they arrived home Barry went all over the

visit to Carcassonne again with Miss Steady, taking occasion to assure Miss Steady that Mrs. Quentin was fine. And Miss Steady, of course, agreed heartily. . . .

A few days later Hallie accidentally saw Barry Senior. He was with Jack in Finley. And Jack, who had for the moment forgotten which Barry Hallie had met, assumed it was Senior.

"You did n't give Mrs. Quentin her swimming lessons yet," he said to open a conversation; "she 'll hold you to it."

Barry Senior looked distressed, and Jack immediately saw his mistake. Barry Senior plainly did n't know what Jack was talking about, and he did n't know who this woman might be. But it would not do to refer to it. Jack felt hot with embarrassment. He did not know what to say to tide over the gap. Hallie helped him out.

"I'm so excited about learning to swim, Mr. Larramore," she exclaimed enthusiastically; "can hardly wait till Wednesday when you've promised to give me my first lesson."

Barry Senior's troubled eyes cleared. Jack had identified Hallie for him. He knew Dr. Quentin quite well, and this was evidently his wife. Quite evidently, too, he had made some fool promise to give her swimming lessons.

"I'll be Johnnie on the spot," he said heartily and quickly, speaking the words as he assumed Barry Junior would have done. But the imitation was a sad failure, Hallie instantly felt. For one thing, the charming catch in his voice was absent, and there was no real life in the enthusiasm. But it served to tide over an embarrassing moment. They talked of other things.

After that meeting Hallie no longer joked about the Jekyll-Hyde anomaly. The tragedy she had read in the grave eyes of this quiet man had almost brought a taste of tears into her throat. As a "case" Barry Larramore might be curious, as Barry Junior he might be entertaining, but as Barry Senior he was a tragedy. He too probably had had his dream of achievement.

CHAPTER XVI

It would be wrong to give the impression that Briar and Hallie were utterly unhappy during the months immediately following the death of the baby. They were young and their spirits rebounded from depression to a renewal of hope. Things were not working out as they had planned. It seemed for the moment that they were face to face with a stone wall in their lives. But deep down in their hearts they believed that it was not a stone wall at all; or if it was, that there was a gate in it somewhere, could they but find it.

But things were difficult at times. The old spirit of complete understanding between them was gone, and Briar sometimes suffered keenly because of the loss. In the old days when Hallie kissed him there had been complete *abandon* in her kiss. She had given all of her; and she had demanded all of him, eagerly, with the hunger of youth for love. That had been the wonder of her to him, that she had given all and taken all. But now when she kissed him it was subtly borne in upon him that she was withholding something of herself. There were times when Dr. Quentin felt he could not endure it. He needed all of her; without that he had a sense of being starved. It was little comfort to him that to all outward appearances she was the same Hallie who had loved him passionately but a year or two ago. His nature demanded her "real" self, all of her, body, mind, and soul.

He was ruthlessly selfish about it; and the workings of the man's mind who could murder the woman he loved better than his own life were perfectly clear to Dr. Quentin. There did not seem to be anything abnormal about such a mind. He would sometimes stand fingering Judge Kester's favorite rifle that always hung loaded on wooden pegs in the kitchen at Carcassonne and try to realize what a temptation it would be to a person of a certain type of mind. He could follow such a man's "reasoning," and the word did not seem to Dr. Quentin to require quotation marks. He took endless delight in following the mental processes of Dostoyevski's characters. Hallie even became impatient sometimes with his constant preoccupation, while in the house, with one or another of the novels of the great Russian. Not that she objected to Dostoyevski, but she would have been equally annoyed if he had always read the Bible, or Lives of the Saints, or the sermons of Jonathan Edwards. She was eager for variety, and always seeing a book with the same binding in his hand got on her nerves.

"Oh, for Heaven's sake, Briar," she burst out on one occasion, unable to control herself, "why don't you have different covers put on each of these books?"

Briar was astonished. It had never occurred to him that the covers of a book could affect a person like that. To him covers did not count; they were merely a convenience. But that a lunatic character talked like a lunatic, and not like a perfectly sane writer's uninspired idea of a lunatic — that was what counted, that was the book. And the Dostoyevski volumes were constantly being made

new for him the more he learned about abnormal psychology. The books had changed themselves before his very eyes a score of times, so that the very covers had a different look to him.

"Suppose you make jackets for them from Sunday supplements!" he suggested with a smile; and Hallie, ashamed of her outburst, also tried to make it appear in the light of a joke.

But it was only partly successful. Briar could not mistake the feeling of annoyance; the outburst had been too genuine for that. And he understood it instantly. He felt that way himself often, but from other causes. There were times when her manner of closing a door made him clench his hands and grit his teeth. It was almost more than he could stand. He wanted at such times to cry out, "Oh, for God's sake, take it out on me directly, not on the door!" But he knew how ridiculous it would sound. For as likely as not Hallie had closed the door with reasonable gentleness. It was only that he had received some impression, mysteriously, almost mystically, that she was annoyed with him, was secretly criticizing him, and every sound she made was like a sledgehammer's blow. It made his nerves raw.

Hallie was immediately sorry that she had yielded to the impulse about the books. She noticed after that that he did not read the volumes often. It was as it had been with his "specimen"-hunting. Her ridicule had driven him into doing it with a clandestine air. He went about it like a boy who has been forbidden to go in swimming, and she knew instinctively that he hated and despised himself

for having that feeling. So now she saw his eyes wander to the Dostoyevski set sometimes and she read longing in them as well as shame. But she could not say, "I don't object, Briar!" That would have been too ridiculous. What is more, it would have been an insult. He became restless, and she would have welcomed his resort to the monotonous gray covers.

Dr. Quentin knew that if he had only been successful, the present strained situation could never have arisen. Not because Hallie was a worshiper of Success. His own nerves were as much to blame as hers. Success would have taken away his sense of guilt. Then he could have indulged himself in geology or Dostoyevski or any other fad that the mind of man has devised. It would have been a pastime then, laughed at, perhaps, but harmless. Hallie would, perhaps, have made as much fun of it as she did now, but he would have laughed at her in his turn and serenely indulged himself. Even a hobby, he discovered, has to be worked for, and a pastime has to be paid for in labor. It was the death of their dream of achievement that made frittering away his time in extraneous pursuits seem a crime.

For his letters to Dr. Hazzeldeen had not brought the results he had hopefully expected. The great authority on neurasthenics wrote warmly. Briar had been a favorite with him, and he had had great expectations for the student. But failure, Briar read between the lines, bears compound interest, as it were, in curtailment of opportunity. Green out of medical school, more doors would have been open to him than there were now, with a record of failure

to his discredit. Dr. Hazzeldeen was very kind. His letters were encouraging. Briar had been quite frank with him. The great authority admitted that he himself had also been born with the faculty men call "business sense" missing. That was why he was on the faculty of a medical school earning five thousand dollars a year while many of his students of mediocre talent were making fifteen or twenty thousand. Briar must not be discouraged. He, Dr. Hazzeldeen, would be on the lookout for him.

But Briar was pessimistic. He was convinced Hazzeldeen was less hopeful than he seemed. And he was glad he had told Hallie nothing of the project. It would have been too humiliating. In fine, he was a failure. He found a certain bitter pleasure in accepting the thing in its stark nakedness. To have covered it with apologetic phrases would have been unendurable. Failure, accepted for what it was, was at least honest.

It was not Hallie's nature to sit still and do nothing. Ever since the death of "It" she had been thinking. If Briar could not measure up to the demands of her dream of achievement, she herself would have to go to work. She was free not only, she craved something to make up for the loss of her baby. Following what seemed to her at the time the lines of least resistance, because the work could be done at home and no unpleasant explanations would have to be made to Briar, she began to flirt with ideas of authorship.

At times it seemed a little grotesque to Hallie's practical nature, and with a view of learning how it would strike some one else she joked to Miss Steady about it.

"That's what women in novels always do when the wolf's almost at the door, as with us; they turn to writing, even though they've never set pen to paper in their lives before. They turn out a breath-taking best-seller and astonish the world with their genius, just in the nick of time, when the baby is almost ready to starve and the sick husband can't afford to buy any more medicine!"

Miss Steady did not take her seriously. Besides, Miss Steady knew nothing about writing. If she ever thought about books as a business at all, she probably supposed the writers paid to have them printed, instead of getting money out of them.

"I guess that's what I'll go in for," Hallie ran on; "write a smashing best-seller and take the world by storm."

Miss Steady agreed somewhat vaguely that that would be lovely. The subject did not interest her much. She wanted to know how Hallie managed never to drop a stitch in crocheting the intricate pattern she was at work on, a pattern that Miss Steady had in vain tried to master.

And Hallie actually began a story. For a while she was excited. Briar wondered. She was so preoccupied, he did not know what to make of it. She hugged her secret. That was part of the game, as told in the novels. The wife always kept it a secret until the great publisher had signed the contract three days after receiving the manuscript and after having accepted it by telegraph; then she blazed out with it in a grand climax before an admiring world, and especially before a husband or lover who had never suspected her great powers.

There was a flavor of irony in her thought of herself as author. She made unsparing fun mentally of her pretensions. She saw her name blazoned across the tops of "literary sections" of newspapers, and the next moment she was saying, "Of course, it's always that way in the stories!" Film companies would clamor for the picture rights; David Belasco would wire asking for dramatic rights. And there would be advance royalty.

"Of course, they always do that with a young unknown writer, the publishers do!" with an ironic smile; "they're so interested in his career they love to give him money. And does n't the character-author in the movie story always get advance royalty? No, it would n't be complete without advance royalty!"

She laughed at herself, but she was a good deal excited none the less. Perfectly unknown writers did sometimes achieve a triumph.

Briar was puzzled. He could not imagine what Hallie was after. He caught strange lights gleaming in her eyes, and she was abnormally silent. There were whole evenings when she hardly said a word, and she appeared to be anxious to have him away. She did not say so, but he felt it in her bearing.

A queer thought obtruded itself, but he laughed it away.

"You damn fool!" he muttered almost audibly.

"You said something?" Hallie, with a book on her lap, came out of a brown study.

"Merely swearing at myself," he explained, and she did not ask him why. Her indifference cut sharply, although in one way he was grateful: it would have been awkward

to invent an excuse for the profanity on the spur of the moment. . . .

But there were periods of sharp reaction against their estrangement — "vacations" they both thought of them. The old joy in each other would sweep through them. The "vacations" lasted a week sometimes, but oftener a day or two.

They took advantage of one of them for an excursion in their roadster to Pinelands Point, twelve miles north. In the early days when they first had the car, they frequently went there for a picnic of two, with occasionally Miss Steady and the children accompanying them. The dunes at that point were heavily wooded and hence but slightly migratory.

There was one secluded spot, made grassy by a tiny lake connected with the big lake by an underground outlet, where they had loved to idle an afternoon away. And here once more they spent a long, happy afternoon.

At night after their lunch-box supper they were reluctant to leave, although they knew some sections of the road were difficult traveling after dark. They had a feeling that another "vacation" was almost over and they tried to postpone its ending.

As they had often done on the top of the Crownéd Monarch, they watched the stars come out; there were no lights of the town to watch, for the town was twelve miles away. But the stars reproduced themselves in the clear surface of Pinelands Point Lake. They took great trouble locating "their own" star; they had no guide here as they had on the Crownéd Monarch. And when they found it

at last they felt very near together. It was like discovering a friendly face in an alien land, and the star to them was not a planet a million miles away. It was a friend and a confidant.

It was a warm evening and Briar's coat was off. He sat with his back against a pine-tree, and Hallie leaned her head against him. They were lovers again, with the blessed faith of lovers in the promises of the future. Hallie was so happy when she felt his lips upon her hair that the tears sprang into her eyes, and she did not wipe them away. . . .

But a day or two later the old depression had come back. Briar reproached himself for a romantic; "vital" men, he thought, would be fighting, not letting the love of a woman interfere with them. And Hallie descended again into a black mood of hopelessness. Authorship seemed for the moment preposterous. The ironist in her heart had for the time being laughed into retirement the fatuous creator. And she did not seem to know what to write about. Her grandiose dreams of a triumph were piffle, she told herself pessimistically.

CHAPTER XVII

Barry Larramore proved to be a safety valve for Briar and Hallie. He spent a great deal of time at Carcassonne after that first visit when Rose introduced him to the place. Miss Steadfast's house on the rim of the Big Swamp almost immediately took second place. Barry still stopped there frequently, but it was almost always in passing. He was either on his way to Carcassonne or else he was returning from the Quentins. And both Briar and Hallie for the time being forgot their own troubles in their absorption in Barry's.

They were not sunk, as might have been expected, in pity for the semi-death-in-life existence of the iron king's son. Barry did not often inspire people with pity; at least not Barry Junior, and he was almost always Barry Junior when he came to Carcassonne. Briar forgot his own troubles out of sheer curiosity about Barry as a "case," and Hallie soon hit upon Barry as "material."

She discovered it with almost indescribable excitement. She would "write Barry." What could be more dramatic? And it was so absurdly simple. All she needed to do was cultivate him, and he was eager to be cultivated by her. All the time she could be making clandestine mental notes that could later be set down in a blankbook and used as material for her best-seller. Were n't the publishers always talking about "a transcript from life"? She smiled ironically, but that did not prevent her from being genuinely excited.

Both Briar and Hallie were calmly setting about exploiting Barry Larramore, Briar in the interest of science, Hallie in the interest of literature.

Dr. Quentin had been studying Barry for years, almost since the very first day of his career as a doctor in Finley. He had early struck up an acquaintance with Barry and also with John Wesley Larramore. He had visited the Farms a few times with "authorities" who had been brought from far off by old John Wesley. Several of the other doctors of Finley had done the same thing; and he, like them, had been there purely as a person with a scientific interest in an unusual case. There had been no pretense that he or the others from Finley had any part in the case. They had come along more in the capacity of students at a clinic.

Dr. Quentin's opportunity for contact with Barry Larramore had been limited. Latterly Barry Senior and Barry's father had stopped consulting "authorities," having lost hope. As for Barry Junior, he had never paid much attention to the "medical sharks" — his term for them. He thought them rather a nuisance, and he was secretly glad when his father decided not to bother with them any longer. And there had, of course, never been any question on the part of the elder Larramore of consulting Dr. Quentin professionally, especially not when Briar began to stack up in Finley as a failure. But even had he been as successful as Dr. Washburn, he would have had no opportunity for a systematic study of the case. John Wesley Larramore could afford to bring the country's biggest men to Larramore Farms.

But not one of those big men studied Barry's case for more than a month or two at the longest, and meanwhile they were often preoccupied with other cases; while Dr. Quentin had been more or less occupied with it, as much as casual opportunities permitted, for three years. The problem of Barry's "disintegrated personality" was often on his mind, and frequently he found himself forming hypotheses about it. It was none of his affair, and more than once he had reproached himself with wasting time on it. There were times when his mind insisted on running along on the Barry problem at the very moment when he was supposed to be making a diagnosis of the trouble of another patient. He attributed in some part his failure to this fact, but he could not control his thoughts. There was real money in the other cases, while in Barry there could never be any money for himself or for any of his colleagues in Finley; and one is compelled to be practical if he wants to survive. Dr. Quentin admitted all this, and he thought of his interest in Barry as a vice almost, but it was a vice that he could not shake off.

And now suddenly the gods, in the persons of Jack and Rose, had shaken this most interesting "specimen" of them all right into his lap. Dr. Quentin's mind bit into it like a greedy boy's teeth into a red apple.

He was glad, glad now that the great Hazzeldeen had found nothing for him elsewhere. Not for worlds would he have left Carcassonne now. He thanked the gods he was where he was, and that his time and energies were but partly taken up in his practice. He even lost interest for the time being in "specimen"-hunting. Or, when he did

go, he took Barry along on his rambles through the hills, the "specimen"-hunting a mere pretense.

And accepting the trips among the hills as a pretense, he felt free to indulge himself. Barry was the complete justification. He and Hallie had never spoken about it, but curiously he did not need Hallie's approval now.

His mind flashed back to his frequent analysis of mental attitudes of masterful men, and he was for a moment appalled by what he saw.

"Good Lord, I'm exactly like 'em!"

In his absorption in the Barry case he did not seem to need Hallie. He sometimes seemed to forget her very existence. And not for brief periods, but for days. He felt guilty. He was neglecting her.

Perhaps that was why she had drawn into herself. He knew Hallie for a high-spirited woman who would never descend to begging for his love as an alms. She could do without him quite as well as he could without her.

"Suppose —" he thought. But he was not familiar with the very common device in fiction of having a wife turn to another because of her husband's neglect. Briar knew almost no fiction except that of Dostoyevski. That Hallie might conceivably become wholly alienated from him, in spite of herself, because he was a failure, appeared much more reasonable to him.

But he would retrieve himself splendidly. He felt the early stirrings of triumph. He would make her proud of him some day.

Meanwhile he would be more careful. He made as many resolves as a confirmed drunkard. But he broke them all.

Sometimes he revived his neglected investigations into the life-history of the gully. Some of the spaces of the almost perpendicular wall that Dr. Quentin and Jack had cleared of vines and moss had been overgrown again, and they had to do the work over.

Barry Junior for a little while was enthusiastic. It was a new game. He entered into it in the spirit of going in for sailing or ice-boating, or any other sport. But when Dr. Quentin went into technical details about the crystal formations that he discovered with the use of the microscope, Barry lost interest. At such times he often wandered over to the "syndicate" hotel in the near distance to mingle with the summer resorters on its wide porches or to watch boys and girls play tennis on the concrete courts that the "syndicate" had built. But when it happened to be Barry Senior, he stayed with the investigations, as interested as Briar.

Martin Skager found the two at it one afternoon, working hard over the fascinating secrets of the gully wall. The fisherman joined them, climbing down halfway by the aid of natural footholds, and then dropping himself, landing squarely on his feet.

Briar talked rock crystals. Martin Skager listened with a humorous gleam in his eyes. Barry Senior, who knew all about mining, took it as seriously as he did everything to which he gave his attention.

"Do you know," said Martin Skager, "that this here gully's goin' to be filled up one of these days?"

Barry Senior was instantly interested. He wanted to know why.

Martin Skager held his thick thumb in alignment with a wild-cherry-tree whose top could just be seen a few hundred feet away.

Briar was not paying close attention, but Barry Senior eagerly followed the direction of Martin Skager's thumb.

"See that? See how them two hills have been running together? They've almost buried that cherry-tree already, and before you know it, it will be snowed under."

"*Sanded* under," Dr. Quentin joined the discussion.

Martin Skager's shrewd eyes gleamed for a moment in appreciation of his friend's pleasantry.

"But see what's happening," he pursued his theory: "there's several hundred thousand tons of loose sand — more or less — running into a pile between them two hills, and it's straight in line with our gully. Some fine day there's goin' to be a whale of a storm, a nor'wester, at a right smart sharp angle, and then that sand heap will come thundering over the map. It'll pour into every small hole and crack, and your poor old gully will get the worst of it. It'll fill up like the sand was poured into it by a machine through a funnel."

He pointed to the spot a short distance beyond the "syndicate's" concrete bridge, some distance beyond which the gully had once extended.

"Same thing happened there. Only thing saved your gully so far is, the wind's almost never at a sharp enough angle."

Barry Senior looked with grave, inquiring eyes at Dr. Quentin. Briar made a seconding nod to Martin Skager's theory.

"I looked for it long ago," he said; "that's why that concrete bridge is so absurd. One of these days it will be resting along all its length on solid sand — a bridge with nothing to be bridged! It's silly as it is — an ugly monstrosity, but the summer resorters call it picturesque. I wish a little earthquake would come along and shake it down into the gully!"

He spoke almost vindictively. He hated the hotel and all its appurtenances almost as much as did "Reverend" Otley. And for the same reason: he loved the dunes. . . .

For Hallie both Barrys were an absorbing study, and in addition Barry Junior personally was entertainment. His instant great admiration for her was so nakedly unconcealed that it was almost funny. Barry was Hallie's shadow whenever he was at Carcassonne, and his father's big car was constantly turning in there.

Miss Steadfast joked her about it.

"You've made a conquest, Hallie. I half believe Barry Junior will murder Dr. Quentin some fine day and carry you off by main force!"

She laughed. Barry Junior, for all of his physical maturity, was such a boy. In the face of his unfailing air of light-heartedness and irresponsibility of youth, one simply could n't believe in the other Barry for the time being. Barry Junior seemed a completely normal, gay-hearted, pleasure-loving young man who did not let the blanks in his existence, represented by the emergence of Barry Senior, cast a shadow over his life. He was determined to have a "good time."

And first of all there was teaching Hallie how to swim.

He could not be put off. He pursued his purpose with a tenacity that would have done honor to a man of much more mature judgment. He came back to the subject so often that Hallie was shamed into conquering her fear of deep water. She finally consented to let him try.

Privately she whispered to Briar, "Keep a close eye on us; he may not be as good a swimmer as Jack imagines!"

But Briar had no fears on that score. He had frequently seen Barry perform in the water.

"He's a human duck," he whispered back reassuringly, but he promised to stay on guard.

So Briar and Rose kept near them during the initial lessons. Rose was a fair swimmer. And, of course, Briar had been right. Barry was a "human duck," and he was good at teaching Hallie. After a few days she even began to be interested. It was at least exciting, and any excitement helped her not to think of her own troubles.

She often also forgot she was exploiting Barry for literary purposes.

And Barry Junior dragged the Quentins off to Larramore Farms. It was through him that Hallie and Briar became intimate with old John Wesley Larramore. Barry, it seemed, had paved the way for their reception for weeks by daily stories of what a wonderful man Dr. Quentin was, and he had also spoken warmly of Hallie. But Mr. Larramore, familiar with Barry Junior's enthusiasms, had not taken him too seriously. But in the end he was practically forced by Barry Junior to invite the doctor and his wife to the Farms.

But reluctantly. John Wesley Larramore, since his

wife's death and his son's misfortune, had drawn into himself a good deal. The Larramore mines up in the Superior district were being operated by Jasonne, who had been his confidential adviser and business lieutenant for years; and he himself had withdrawn to the Larramore Farms, in the vague belief that the quiet peace of rural life would have a good effect on Barry. Some "authority" in the early days of the trouble had advised it. The rapidly ageing man had not mingled much in the life of Finley. He had given his heart to the development of a fine herd of blooded Holsteins, and Barry Junior's insistence on dragging him out of his retirement and making him invite the Quentins to Larramore Farms had been keenly annoying.

He had complained to Barry Senior about it in an unguarded moment.

"You're such a damned ass sometimes when you're your other self!" But he had instantly checked himself. The brooding misery in Barry Senior's eyes had been almost more than he could bear. He was glad that Barry was Barry Junior most of the time. For though Barry Junior was much less sensible than his other self, he was also far less unhappy. The original Barry had been neither Barry Senior nor Barry Junior. He had been an amalgamation of the former's intellectual force and serious outlook and the latter's light-hearted optimism, and a something that, under certain conditions, might almost be described as sensuousness.

But the time came when John Wesley Larramore invited the Quentins over to the Farms for his own sake. Hallie captured the old man almost immediately.

"You've made a conquest, Hallie," Briar assured her jokingly the first time they came away from the place in the Larramore Farms car, George, the colored chauffeur, driving.

Hallie squeezed Briar's hand in answer. She had enjoyed herself and she felt excited. Barry was proving up as rich "material," especially as he appeared in his home surroundings. And Hallie had decided to "study" old John Wesley also. The iron king would make splendid copy, and he would fit in well in the story.

Hallie wanted to get home so they could discuss the visit without fear of being overheard by the driver.

They were often asked to the Farms after this. Dr. Quentin discussed Barry's case with the old man; and while under the spell of Briar's talk Mr. Larramore indulged in the fatuous hope for a moment that the day of miracles was not yet past. Next day he called himself a fool. He was a hard-headed man, not easily carried off his feet; and Dr. Quentin was after all only a man who had not made good in his profession. The man had magnetism of a certain kind, Larramore admitted, but did he know as much about Barry's mental processes as he pretended to know?

John Wesley was frankly skeptical, and for weeks Briar was under observation. Fortunate for him that he did not know it. It would have frozen his eager interest. But he did not look upon Barry as his patient, or as his potential patient. He took it for granted that that was understood between them. So he could talk freely. It was purely a scientific "exploration" — that was the word he used for

it in his own mind. He wanted Mr. Larramore's consent to his hypnotizing Barry a few times. He had a theory that some of the "cut threads" between the young man's two personalities could perhaps be knit together in that way.

Mr. Larramore was reluctant. Dr. Quentin was still on trial. But in the course of one of the discussions Briar mentioned his earlier connection with the great Dr. Hazzeldeen. Next day Mr. Larramore made what Bunson in the "Herald" called a "business trip" to Chicago. And soon after his return he gave his consent to the experiment.

But he said nothing about his talk with Hazzeldeen.

CHAPTER XVIII

Bunson's philippics against "Reverend" Otley continued in the "Herald," and the town chose sides, as it was bound to do. There were a good many who were secretly pleased that the "syndicate" project was meeting with some rough road. They had "pulled out" because they had been afraid something would happen, and obviously, if something did not happen, but all went well, their judgment and good sense would stand convicted before the fortunate ones who had not yielded precipitately to the impulse to play safe.

Oh, they did not give voice to any of this. They were boosters, not knockers, and they proclaimed this fact loudly on all occasions; anything that was for the best interests of Finley they were back of, and they wanted all the world to know it. They were ready to proclaim it from the housetops — and at the lunch-counter of the Acme Restaurant. And the "syndicate" project, if it worked out the way Bunson had a dozen times pictured it in the "Herald," would be a big thing for Finley. Stock or no stock, they were vocally for it, and loudly so.

But — there was the fact that many had "pulled out," and a man does not like to confess that his judgment has been wrong. So much more pleasant to sit at the Acme lunch-counter with a wise air, after the project has gone wrong, and say:

"I smelled a rat long ago; was one of the first to pull out.

Twenty years ago I might have fallen for that kind of thing, but to-day —"

But as yet it did not look anything like that, and many were secretly afraid the thing would be a howling success. In fact, those who did not "pull out" when the place first began to be known as "Monte Carlo" were crowing lustily. There had been a semi-annual dividend on the common stock — the first one — and it had been ten per cent.

"Not so rotten!" the fortunate ones exulted; "that will mean twenty per cent for the year, and that right off the bat, when they've hardly started."

"Provided the police don't raid the place and confiscate it," the others defended themselves.

That remark always struck fire. The "syndicate" backers met it with burning eyes.

"Don't you worry, at least if the business elements of Finley have civic patriotism enough in their systems not to go over to that damned Otley. That man is dangerous — a menace. There ought to be a law to shut him up."

The others, of course, loudly disclaimed even the faintest sympathy with Otley, but there was sometimes a secret smile in their eyes when they saw how nervous the fortunate ones who had not "pulled out" were. It seemed a kind of poetic justice that they should be forced to sweat a little for their easy money, and those who had "pulled out" felt rather more kindly toward Otley than they were willing to admit.

"The Lord will bring it about," they quoted him facetiously, and the "syndicate" backers were always slightly suspicious of the quotation.

And they did have to sweat for their money. The charge that the place was a high-class gambling-den and that the hotel feature of it was hardly more than a blind grew and grew. The mere name of "Monte Carlo" had power to throw the "syndicate" backers into fits of rage. Any one who employed that term, intentionally or not, was a traitor to the best interests of Finley. The "syndicate" stockholders were not afraid for their money (was their stock not bringing twenty per cent right off the bat?), but for their reputations. A vestryman in a church, and several of them were that, cannot afford to be "interested" financially in a polite gambling-den. But the others at the Acme lunch-counter often secretly snickered when they thought of the hole the stockholders were in.

But the place was unquestionably making money. This became increasingly clear as the summer advanced. And the more prosperous it appeared to be, the more Otley thundered against it. But he showed much shrewdness about it, taking care not to give any one a legal handle against him. And the more Otley harangued, the more Bunson fumed in the "Herald." All in all, it was the best entertainment that had come to Finley for many a year.

In the course of time it began to be whispered around that John P. Nash was "in deep" with the "syndicate." The rumor started, perhaps, from the fact that Nash had handled things for most of those who had prudently withdrawn. He had merely been a go-between, his clients had understood, and in some cases they knew that this was strictly according to fact. But some of the "syndicate" backers merely smiled when this was pointed out. Of

course, John P. Nash had not taken on all of the paper and real estate that had been unloaded during the first panic about the place; they admitted that fully. The man did n't have money enough himself, and he could not swing enough money to pull that off. It was entirely too large an order, and they were not fool enough to suppose it. But neither must it be supposed that John P. Nash had been fool enough to let such a chance slip by. John P. Nash was a business man, and a darn smart one. He could be depended upon to know a good thing when it was shoved right under his nose, by thunder! That for those who had "pulled out." The "syndicate" backers did not forego their revenge for the secret laughter about their troubles.

"Nash is in the inner circle," they declared. "That twenty per cent in dividends means a small fortune for him, and most of it is on borrowed money. John P. Nash is a shrewd proposition."

All of which very properly the others discounted a good deal, but none the less they looked up to John P. Nash with a new respect. Any one who could pull a small fortune out of a business venture in Finley, and do it on other people's money that he paid six per cent for and that earned twenty per cent for him, was no fool. It had to be admitted that it was people like Nash who built up the town. Such people went ahead and let tongues wag as they would. There were times when the more timid ones were heartily ashamed of not having stood by their guns — partly because of that twenty per cent and partly because it seemed somewhat unheroic to let a crazy preacher like Otley throw them into a panic.

John P. Nash's great difficulty, of course, was to get hold of enough money to swing his ventures; and when his brother-in-law, Dr. Quentin, became intimate with John Wesley Larramore, Nash immediately saw a great opportunity. If handled in the right way, it would make money for Larramore, for Nash himself, and for Dr. Quentin. Nash felt unselfish about it. He was willing to let some one else in on a good thing, and he believed almost fanatically in the "syndicate" project. If enough capital could be pried loose to swing the "syndicate's" plans, the returns would be big. Nash's holdings in lots against the sand hills and in common stock in the hotel would actually realize the mythical three hundred per cent that some had sanguinely dreamed of in the beginning. The man who supplied the capital — namely, John Wesley Larramore — would get big dividends; and the man through whom he, Nash, and Larramore were brought together — namely, Dr. Briar Quentin — would be carried along and would come in on the killing. And the whole thing would be for the glory and the welfare of Finley. John P. Nash felt a virtuous glow spread over his body. He felt sincerely altruistic and he was almost choking with good-will to men.

He often tried to "get next to old Larramore," but the iron-master was not easily approachable. He was so damned courteous, John P. Nash declared, but he never gave you an opening to talk business. He could not be approached from the social side through women, because he was virtually a recluse on his Farms. Nash had tried Barry numerous times; but Barry Junior was worse than

useless for his purposes, and Barry Senior was, if anything, more unapproachable than his father.

With his feet hitched up on his desk in his private office, Nash had sat for hours at a time studying the problem, but there had never seemed a solution. And then one night Mildred came home with the news that the "Quentins were thick with the Larramores." To Mildred it meant nothing more than a bit of social small change, and she was surprised at her husband's way of receiving the information.

"Briar thick with the Larramores! And Hallie!"

Mildred reaffirmed what she had said.

John P. Nash dropped his napkin. Then he struck his hands together. He was about to emit an exclamation of exulting triumph, but he repressed the impulse. Women were so funny about such things. Never could tell what they might do or say. And he was not going to have anybody queer his game, not even Mildred. But Mildred wondered what the look in his face meant. He was patently laboring under great emotional excitement, and she could see no adequate reason for it. He let no grass grow under his feet. That very evening he ran over to Carcassonne in his car; and while Mildred and the boys visited with Hallie on the porch, he found opportunity to get Briar alone. They took a stroll to the beach.

. . . "And we'll set aside a block of stock for you yourself — won't cost you a red cent; you can pay for it out of the earnings," John P. Nash finished his presentation of the case.

The two men were seated on the sixty-thousand-dollar sea wall. The waves were gently splashing up against the

base of the concrete palisades. About them was the hum of the summer resort life, the promenading boys and girls, the men and women on the wide porches of the hotel in the near distance, a few children playing in the sand. The stars were coming out. Briar absently watched for "their star" that would soon appear over the Crownéd Monarch near the edge of the beechnut-tree. They had been sitting there a considerable while, and John P. Nash had been doing all the talking, Briar at first not quite understanding.

But now that he had the whole story he shook his head.

"I could n't go into that, of course, John P." He spoke so quietly that John P. Nash smiled. He had expected just that. Briar might be a fool, but he would try for better terms for himself than John P. had as yet offered. Nash in fact was reconciled to increasing the gift of stock, but not right away. But to his amazement Briar acted as if the whole thing had been disposed of. When Nash pressed him he repeated — more emphatically this time — that he could n't go into it.

"But, my God, man!" Nash burst out, "I'm not asking you to rob the old tight-wad! I want you to help him make money — do him a good turn, show him where he can invest and get big returns."

"I'm not interested in Larramore's investments." Briar spoke harshly. Nash's tone had nettled him.

"But it's so simple, Briar," John P. Nash urged in a more conciliating tone; "you're on the right side of the old man, you've got his confidence. You and Hallie are thick with him. I'll bet he'd do anything for Hallie — she's that kind. All you need to do is get him interested in our project and he'll do the rest."

"It's a fool plan," Dr. Quentin maintained stubbornly, "and I tell you I won't go into it."

Briar's calling it a fool plan made Nash lose his temper. He was about to say something sharp, but he controlled himself in time. "But what are your objections, Briar?"

Briar's eyes found the star they had been searching for, found it at the edge of the beechnut-tree that stood silhouetted in faint outline against the rapidly darkening evening sky. He decided on frankness.

"For years I've been trying to get next to Larramore, as you would call it. It was on account of a little deal of my own. Quite by chance I've won the confidence of the old man. He believes I'm honest and aboveboard about it. He knows what I'm after, there is no concealment. I need his absolute confidence. Even with it I may fail, but it is indispensable. And do you suppose for one minute I'm going to do anything or say anything that might give color to the suspicion that all the time I had an ulterior motive — that I was trying to milk him? Not much! You must think I'm a fool."

Privately John P. Nash thought just that.

"And what is it you are after, if I may ask?"

Briar hesitated, but he decided on frankness.

"A complete chance to study Barry's case."

But it sounded queer, almost quixotic, and Dr. Quentin was conscious of its flatness to Nash's practical ears.

"But, God, man, there's ten times more money in my plan than even the biggest fee that even Larramore would ever think of handing out."

Briar lost his temper. "I don't care a damn if there

was a hundred thousand times more money in it," he exploded; "I told you I won't and that's the end of it." Then, recollecting that Nash had used the term "fee," "Who said anything about fees? I'm not on Barry's case—not professionally. All I want is a chance to study him."

Nash laughed. "Not on his case! Well, I'll be damned!"

Dr. Quentin disdained an answer.

"Can you cure him?" Nash demanded.

"Good Lord, how do I know? I'm not a four-flusher. Anyway, I don't care to discuss it."

John P. Nash began all over again from another angle. Briar was a somewhat unusual case and perhaps he had not handled him right. That he would eventually "fall for" the "proposition" the lawyer did not at all doubt. But it would take more maneuvering than Nash had supposed at first. The important point was to get Briar to help him, Nash, to "get in with" old John Wesley. As Briar's brother-in-law it would be quite simple. He was sure Hallie alone could manage it; but Briar's coöperation was needed, so the latter would not by chance or design "queer things" at any stage of the game.

Nash let fall the suggestion that if Briar did n't pave the way, some one else would have to do it.

Briar jumped up from his seat on the sea wall.

"Just exactly what do you mean by that?" he demanded belligerently.

Nash, in spite of his resolve not to rub any fur the wrong way, resented the tone. "I don't know as that would concern you, since you insist on staying out and cutting off your nose to spite your face."

Briar's eyes burned in the darkness. All this was of much greater concern to him than John P. Nash could begin to realize. He scented danger. Just as he had hold of something, he saw another reaching out and spoiling things. He was not going to let any one or any thing interfere without a fight.

"It concerns me this much," he said in a low tone, but so incisively that John P. Nash received the unmistakable impression that the voice coming to him out of the darkness was electric with determination — "it concerns me this much that if you do or say anything that will in the least way put any suspicions in Larramore's mind that I have even the remotest connection with your financial schemes, I'll come up to your office, and, by God, I'll make you pay for it!"

It was all so unlike Nash's conception of his brother-in-law that for a moment he had the illusion that it was some one else standing there towering over him in the semi-darkness against the background of the ever-restless lake. And the burning eyes and incisive voice cowed him.

Neither one of them spoke another word. They walked back to Carcassonne in complete silence, to be greeted there by Mildred and the boys demanding where they had been all this time. John P. Nash managed a joke to the effect that they had been dancing with summer girls in the ballroom of the "syndicate" hotel; and he soon packed the family into the car and drove away in disgust.

And later in their own room he took the trouble to inform his wife that she had a brother who was a fool.

CHAPTER XIX

Iron to John Wesley Larramore was a religion; it was high adventure; it was romance. For forty years it had been an obsession with him. He had wrested a fortune out of it; but better in his estimation, he had made it the stuff of a life. He had caused the bowels of the earth to serve the world. It made him feel proud. It was the foundation on which his self-respect was built.

For John Wesley Larramore there could never be anything in the world one tenth as interesting as iron. His pure-bred Holstein herd was very close to his heart, but it was to iron what a recreation is to a life's career. That was what the Larramore Farms in fact was, a recreation. He could not have endured the usual summer resort. There had to be substantial things in his life: iron first of all, hard, unyielding, rugged; and then during playtime wide fields, gritty or clayey, sprinkled with stones before the young wheat hid them in green; bulls with strong necks and a fierce glare in their eyes; huge black studhorses whose powerful bodies quivered with excess of vitality; stacks of wheat or oats, the grain packed away from view and from the weather, the outer surface bristling as if defending the life of them against the elements; the acrid smell of ensilage in gray concrete silos; the odor of cows in their stables in winter-time; the far-off whiff of richly manured fields in early spring when the earth is steaming with the heat of the April sun.

He learned to love it all, as much as he could love anything that was not directly associated with the mining of iron. And when disaster came to him, the Larramore Farms became a refuge. In a single year his son, on whom he had built vast plans, became lost to him for such purposes, and his wife died as a consequence of the tragedy. The mines had given, they had also taken away. Partly because the most painful experience of his life was now connected with the mines and partly because certain "authorities" advised the quiet of rural life for Barry, Mr. Larramore reorganized his life, making the Larramore Farms home and the mines a place for outings, instead of *vice versa.*

It was Dr. Quentin's interest in the earth, in material, tangible things — stones and ore, the chemistry of clays and sands, the contours of hills, the life-history of streams — that first attracted him to Larramore, not his interest in Barry as a "case." Barry's father had long since given up hope there, and it was not to be expected that to a hard-headed man like him it would seem conceivable that where "authorities" had failed, an obscure small-town doctor could succeed. John Wesley Larramore was not the man to believe in miracles, and he was not gullible. Had Briar been a doctor only, he would probably never have attracted Larramore's attention or won his confidence.

"He's got something to him," the grizzled man discussed him with his house-guest, Dr. Hazzeldeen, of the university faculty, thoughtfully stroking his short, bristling mustache. Larramore had deliberately gone after Hazzeldeen. He had taken pains to win the scientist's

friendship because he had found him a vital personality on his first visit to the man. And this was Hazzeldeen's first stay at the Farms.

"I had great hopes for him," Hazzeldeen admitted.

"Why the *had?*"

Hazzeldeen hedged. It was plain that Larramore had developed a very great admiration for the young doctor. It would not be courteous to be too blunt.

"Of course I have n't seen him for nearly five years. Had some correspondence with him, but that's all. But I gather that he has — well, that other doctors in Finley have n't been forced to quit," with a smile at the mild pleasantry.

"Proves nothing," from Larramore decisively. "Most people are fools when it comes to choosing a doctor."

Hazzeldeen agreed heartily.

"I asked you over here partly to meet Quentin again and form an opinion of him as he is now. I know men and I think I know Quentin. But I somewhat mistrust myself in this case. There's no doubt in my mind as to him as a personality; there's something to him, as I said just now. But does his personality make me overestimate him as a medical scientist? Are all his theories about Barry mere pipe dreams of a man with an imagination or are they 'real,' as he himself would put it? That's your job, Hazzeldeen, to find out."

"But I might go wrong."

"I'll chance it. You're a scientist, which I take it means the same as being an honest man. I've got to put my faith in somebody. I don't want any compromises with friend-

ship. It means a great deal to me. What I want from you is a straight-from-the-shoulder opinion, regardless of how it affects me or Barry or Quentin."

Briar, of course, had no suspicion that he was on trial. He was almost boyishly glad to see Hazzeldeen again. It had been so long since he had been able to talk with any one about the new developments in Hazzeldeen's department of medicine. He became acutely conscious of the restricted life he had been living, as he picked up the threads of the old friendship. He had been reading, and, more important, he had been thinking; but he had not been rubbing minds with other men who had been thinking. There had been a loss there, and he was eager with the eagerness of a thirsty man for water to make up the deficiency.

They were all at the Larramore Farms one night, invited there to dinner. Hallie was there and Miss Steady and Jack and Rose. Larramore had wanted Dr. Hazzeldeen to see Briar in his natural setting. And the nurse and her children had come to be on friendly terms with the owner of the Larramore Farms through their association with Barry Junior.

It was midsummer and the day had been warm. Dinner was served in the almost baronial dining-room, and afterwards they sat about on the wide porches as the dusk deepened.

Barry happened to be Barry Senior to-night, and his air of brooding melancholy had given a subdued tone to dinner, just as Barry Junior would have given it a slightly hilarious note.

He devoted himself to Hallie. There was just a touch of almost stilted courtesy in his bearing toward her, as if he were trying to play the part of a chivalrous character in a book. It was rather funny, but Barry Senior's lack of a sense of humor prevented him from perceiving it.

Hallie was in a mood for "studying" Barry Senior. It was not often that she had an opportunity. She knew all about Junior, but Senior was rather obscure. His lack of a sense of comedy would be rather funny in "Double-Edged." She had decided to call her story that. It was exciting to probe Barry Senior.

She had decided on an experiment. Accidentally once or twice Barry Senior had changed into Junior in her presence. It had always been to the accompaniment of some chance touch from her hand and a square look of her eyes into his. Perhaps she had a certain power over him. It was even possible that Briar might be able to make use of this power. In any case, it would be exciting to put it deliberately to the test.

At the other end of the porch the men were discussing Barry.

"Neither one is the real personality," Dr. Quentin was saying positively, and he went on at length giving his reasons.

"You may be right," Dr. Hazzeldeen admitted guardedly: "you've had opportunity to observe the two of them."

"The two have to be merged; they must coalesce into one. There's something prevents it. I don't know what it is, but I mean to find out. It's fascinating!" enthusiastically.

Mr. Larramore laughed. "You'd think it was a new breed of Holsteins you were talking about."

Briar apologized.

"I beg your pardon. I clean forgot. The honest fact is, Barry is not a man to me when I consider him medically, but a 'case,' a sort of question mark. There can be no emotion about it, no feeling sorry for him, or considering he's the son of a friend, or that he's a friend himself. The whole thing is purely intellectual, so long as I regard him medically."

"Of course," Dr. Hazzeldeen interpolated. That was too much taken for granted to require statement.

The men stayed on the porch smoking. The little group at the other end had gone into the house. They started a game of five hundred.

Later Barry Senior and Hallie returned to the smokers for a moment, Hallie reminding Briar that it would soon be time to go home. The men kept on talking, and Hallie and Barry returned to the house.

Briar after a little went to find Hallie. Rounding the corner of the porch, he stopped short. Through the vines that climbed up trellis-work he could see the figures of Hallie and Barry at the end of the long gravel path. They stood with their backs to the house, leaning on the gate, looking out over a wide meadow that skirted the driveway. Soft moonlight flooded them, and they had a curious air of romantic intimacy — Barry, tall and well built and somewhat imposing in his evening clothes, his thick fair hair stirred lightly by the breeze; Hallie, slighter and lither, beautiful and adorable in the moonlight.

He stood watching them for a while. They seemed to be talking earnestly. The picture they made gave him a sense of disaster. He felt shame at standing there hidden by the vines watching them, but he could not break away from his vigil.

They stood close together.

"You blithering fool!" he apostrophized himself, and he deliberately closed his eyes. But he did not move away.

He watched them again. After a little he saw Hallie, with a quick, nervous movement, place her hand on Barry's sleeve that was resting on the gate. And standing thus, she seemed to draw his eyes to hers as if by magnetic power. They stood for a moment looking into each other's eyes. Then Hallie removed her hand from his sleeve. And there was a crestfallen air about her, as if she were ashamed of something.

Briar seemed to see things dancing before his eyes. He quickly walked to the other end of the porch and onto the lawn, where he stood in the shadow of a large lilac-bush while Hallie and Barry passed by to go into the house.

Briar did not move. He might have been a plaster-of-Paris figure decorating the grounds. He heard Dr. Hazzeldeen and John Wesley walking along the porch, chatting gayly, to join the others in the living-room, their cigars smoked to the end.

Indoors a card game was in progress, and he could hear Jack's shrill voice calling on his partner to raise the bid. The light was streaming from the windows. In a barn some little distance away he heard cattle stirring in sleep. Far out over the Big Swamp innumerable little luminescent

flickerings told of a possibly exciting type of phosphorescent life whose secret man had not yet discovered. On the opposite rim of the swamp glowed the steady light of "Reverend" Otley's evening lamp. Next door would be the cottage of "Old Steady," dark now and not to be distinguished; and out beyond that, a half a mile into the hills, at the end of a crinkling road, was Carcassonne, where he and Hallie had once been happy.

Where they had once been happy! It seemed long ago.

Suddenly he laughed — at himself.

"Exactly like a movie!" contemptuously. That was just what a movie hero would do — witness a little scene like that and straightway jump to all sorts of absurd conclusions in which years of mutual trust would be annihilated in an instant. No one else in the movies ever thought anything of such a circumstance; only the hero who had to be worked up to some sort of fool climax as preposterous as the man himself.

He had always despised that kind of thing. It was not "real"; it was artificial, worked up, theatrically insincere.

But he halted himself again. Might not the movie writers be right, after all? Had not he, Briar, apostle of reality, done exactly the same thing?

He was conscious of losing his hold on actual things. His intense concentration on the problem of Barry's case had something to do with it. He lived in an unreal world, much as does an actor under the spell of the character he is portraying.

With a shrug that had the force of throwing off something, he turned to the house. It was absurd, the whole business.

And yet, there was always that secret excitement about Hallie. Her mind was far away most of the time. She was hiding something, leading a double life mentally. It was so unconscious that she did not seem to understand that he was noticing it. And of course he could not ask about such a thing.

Stepping into the glare of light in the large living-room, he was besieged by both Jack and Rose to take a hand in the game. He picked up the hand that was dealt him.

"Nine on diamonds!" he cried, and Jack, who was his partner, signaled to him not to be reckless. But Dr. Quentin laughed.

"This is my lucky day, Jack; we'll skin 'em alive!"

And there was still a flush of color in his cheeks when he and Jack made a "slam."

Later that night, when the guests had left, Mr. Larramore and Dr. Hazzeldeen sat smoking in the library.

"Well?" from Barry's father.

"He's been thinking these past five years," was all Dr. Hazzeldeen cared to say for the present.

"Did n't I tell you he was the real thing?" triumphantly.

"He's got something to him," Hazzeldeen quoted Larramore with a friendly smile.

CHAPTER XX

Dr. Quentin was much at the Larramore Farms during Dr. Hazzeldeen's visit, which extended over two weeks. And Hazzeldeen spent some time with the Quentins at Carcassonne. And at twilight, in Briar's crowded den, the two men sat and smoked and talked.

With quite spontaneous interest on the part of each. Dr. Hazzeldeen had forgotten that Dr. Quentin was under observation, and Dr. Quentin did not know it. He picked out a Dostoyevski from its set on the shelf and took up two hours, like so many minutes, proving that the great Russian novelist knew more, through mere intuition, of the processes of madness and of all abnormal mental states, than the scientists had discovered during painstaking years of research. Hazzeldeen had not read Dostoyevski, but Briar so infected him with his enthusiasm that he resolved then and there to look into him as soon as he got back to Chicago. The air of the room was pleasantly heavy with tobacco smoke.

"I can't tell you, Quentin, how I've enjoyed this stay," remarked the great man.

"And I!" exclaimed Briar with enthusiasm.

"I can understand your love for the dunes. They've got into my blood in the short time I've been here. If I had a place like your Carcassonne — curious name, by the way — I'd leave the town to its steam-heated comforts."

Briar sighed. "You forget I've got a living to make,

and you know what a general practice is. That means mixing, self-advertising, ugh!" with a look of distaste.

"I know, I know, Quentin," quickly, remembering that in Finley Briar was looked upon as a failure; "the way the art of healing is organized is tough on people of our peculiar temperaments; and it does n't do any good to remind ourselves that some day a thousand years hence it will have evoluted from a hybrid of business and science into a pure science. You and I are not adjusted to practical conditions. I know, I know; I've been through it. You'll find our kind in all professions. Medicine is not the only one by any means. Men who can't live in the minor keys that practical people demand. Not because they don't want to, but because they don't know how. They can't put their hearts into it. Much of what to the general run of people seems important, to them seems futile."

"But that does n't make it any the more easy for them to be failures," with a suggestion of bitterness; "or for their women to be the wives of failures."

"No-o—" thoughtfully. Hazzeldeen understood the bitterness. Then suddenly, "Why don't you get out?"

Briar had expected this question. "I tried, as you know. Feebly, I admit. The fact is, Barry interfered. Somehow I was glad you could n't land anything for me. I could n't very well break away from this."

Hazzeldeen laughed. Then he explained, when Briar looked surprised. "Proves my theory exactly: you're ninety-nine and nine tenths per cent scientist and one tenth of one per cent practical business man."

Briar smiled. "Of course, Hallie's right to think me a

fool. And besides — this will sound almost sentimental, and I despise a sentimentalist as much as you do, but it's the truth — I've got a sort of feeling that the hills, the lake, and all that kind of thing," — with an embarrassed little laugh, fearful of appearing foolish, — "have something to do with my — my — well, I suppose an ass of an artist would say with his genius. I could n't explain this to my wife even, but I don't mind telling you, Dr. Hazzeldeen — you won't put any misconstruction on it — that I feel a certain power in me, a power of thought along some lines. I've only gradually become conscious of it. It would be nothing but a pose to pretend to be humble, to pretend to know no more than others about certain things. I believe I can learn to do some things better than anybody else on earth. I've been only half conscious of it. Your coming and the talks we've had have revealed much of it to me." His animation suddenly deserted him. Was he talking sense or was he making a fool of himself?

But Dr. Hazzeldeen had a look as if he understood. Briar resumed with confidence:

"And all this" — with an inclusive gesture, indicating the hills, the lake, and "all that sort of thing" — " all this seems to help me to those powers. I don't know if I can make it clear. I suppose I could take a short cut and say they inspire me, but that would mean little, and it would n't begin to express what I feel."

He searched his mind for a moment.

"They give me a hold on intangibles. I read somewhere that writers often go wrong by going to live among other writers or in so-called art centers: trying to subtleize too

much; becoming too self-conscious; losing their hold on real things; forgetting that for the purposes of art the honest smell of dung in a cow pasture may be more important than the most subtle abstractions worked out artificially under the spur of the presence of fellow-artists. It's something like that. The hills are part of me, and I know now they always have been. They're literally in my blood, and I suppose I shall always be a failure, because if I'd go away to specialize, I'd have to leave the best of me here. There would only be something perfunctory left. And here — well, there's no chance for anything else than the usual general practice."

"You're probably right, Quentin." Dr. Hazzeldeen understood, Briar saw with relief. "Of course, you could n't go saying that kind of thing indiscriminately. People would think you unbalanced, and that would be fatal for a doctor. But there are various roads to a particular goal, and each man must travel his own."

"Must travel his own," said Briar absently.

"Beg pardon."

"Oh, nothing," in sudden confusion.

"The power of thought, intuition, cerebration, genius, or whatever you want to call it, is a queer thing and feeds on curious things sometimes. No one knows that better than I do: I've studied that subject all my life."

"That's why I could talk to you."

"You're as like as not right in your self-analysis."

"Right, but that's all the good it does," not without bitterness.

Hazzeldeen's eyes gleamed. He wanted to say some-

thing, but he thought better of it. He and Larramore had been discussing Briar a day or two ago. But perhaps nothing would come of it. Much better keep still for the present.

CHAPTER XXI

HALLIE was much more cheerful than she had been for a long time. Briar was not showing many signs of making headway, and the future for him looked as hopeless as it had ever done. But for her there was excitement that numbed her frequently to the old hopelessness. Barry Junior was fun for his own sake, and while still in the early throes of authorship, she found delightful distraction in that secret occupation. Her absorption in it puzzled Briar, but that would make her triumph, when at last it should come, all the sweeter.

"What children we used to be!" she told Briar half jokingly; "remember how we used to wish we had a little world all to ourselves, up there in our star? We thought we were different from other people, but — I guess — we're just ordinary after all," thoughtfully.

Not without a touch of bitterness this last. It had been her dream that there would always be a tang of high romance about their lives.

"Yes, in our *little* star," said Briar — "fifteen hundred times as large as the earth. No danger getting on each other's nerves there. We could have an archipelago of continents to ourselves!"

"Prosy scientist!"

"Romantic star-gazer!" he paid her out in kind.

They laughed. They were very close together this evening. Briar had had a good day at the office. He had per-

formed a highly delicate operation on a young fellow whose skull had been penetrated by a steel splinter in the Finley Belting Works plant. The case was interesting, and he felt excited — exalted, as an orator feels who has just made a period, amid applause, to a ringing address. It was a piece of the most wonderful luck that the young fellow had been brought up to his office: it was nearer the Belting Works than any other doctor's office.

Hallie had been to a card party and she had had a very good time. She had felt gay and girlish all afternoon. It had been as though there were no troubles in the world. She had had the feel of a "vacation."

She proposed going to a musical comedy at the Majestic and he eagerly assented. They were in the mood for frivolity.

On their return home, on the way from the garage to the cottage, walking slowly under the stars, they said nothing, and to each it seemed a blessed thing to be able to walk side by side in silence, without feeling the silence as something oppressive. Only perfect understanding can achieve that kind of silence, and to-night their hearts were open to each other again.

Arrived on the porch, standing there in the shadow while Briar was fumbling in his pocket for the key, Hallie lightly hugged his arm she had been holding. Briar swung about with the impulsiveness of a boy in the intoxication of first love, caught her in his arms, dropping the key with a clatter on the porch, and kissed her mouth with a passion that had almost become a forgotten thing between them.

They laughed as he picked up the key.

But such incidents, oases in the desert of their lives, made it much harder for Briar to make a flat refusal to Hallie when she appealed to him, a few days later, on behalf of John P. Nash. Nash had "got to" Hallie, as that lawyer himself phrased it. He had convinced her that the "syndicate" resort plan would "go big" if only they could swing enough capital. The directors would set aside a block of stock for Dr. Quentin if he would coöperate in interesting John Wesley Larramore. John P. Nash had proved to Hallie that the investment would double itself in a year or two. It was in fact a kindness to Larramore to persuade him to go in. The directors (John P. Nash did not reveal the fact that that term was practically equivalent to his own person plus two figureheads) — the directors had complete faith that Dr. Quentin — and Mrs. Quentin, he did not forget to add — could "swing" old Larramore. What this naïve faith was based on did not appear — not until long afterwards.

"It's all straight and aboveboard, Briar," Hallie argued. "You need not assure Barry's father you know it's a good thing. All you need to do is say you believe it's a good thing — that you have faith in Nash."

"But I have n't."

Hallie did not take this seriously.

"He's done pretty well for himself."

Briar winced. It was practically the same as saying, "And you have n't."

"I asked Martin Skager's opinion, and he thinks —"

"Oh, come, now, Briar, don't be ridiculous. Martin Skager's a nice old fisherman. I like him, and if I were

going on a lake trip I'd ask his advice about the weather. But in a matter of investment — it's preposterous!"

Briar was offended. Why the devil could n't she let him explain instead of snapping him up like that? So he dropped Martin Skager and his theories.

"Well, then, *I* have no faith in the project," he said testily.

Hallie made no answer. Which was the most cutting answer she could have made. She had in fact little faith in Briar's judgment on a matter of this kind.

He longed for five minutes of the old spirit of unity between them. He could have cleared everything up in a dozen words. Hallie had plenty of common sense and plenty of delicacy. She would have been no more willing to make friendship a tool to further personal interests than he. But she did not so regard this. Nash had been wise enough to place Larramore's interests foremost.

But Briar could not speak the necessary words. He and Hallie were miles apart just then. Anything he might say would be discounted, and anything she said was interpreted by him as personal criticism. He could not say that he was after bigger game — that is, bigger to him — than Nash could conceive, and that to drag his relations with John Wesley Larramore down to the level of a financial transaction, no matter how "straight" the transaction, would be a grotesque travesty on their friendship. Hallie regarded his study of the Barry case skeptically at best, with a kind of half-amused toleration. She put it in her own mind, he knew, on a par with his passion for geology, respecting his sincerity, but looking for no practical results from it.

"Goodness knows we need the money." Hallie felt ashamed to use this argument even while she was advancing it. She knew how it would hurt him, and she would have left it unsaid if she had considered the words. Unexpectedly he lost his temper.

"I would n't stir if we were starving!"

Then, controlling himself: "I'm something of an amateur geologist, Hallie. I know what the dunes can do. I know the lay of the land. I know Martin Skager was right when he said they were nuts to build the hotel where they did. I know that the whole resort site is as unstable as the bottom of the lake, and that it is sure some day to go the way of Jacob Finley's buried village. I may be a good deal of a fool, but knowing all this I'm damned if I'll rope in a friend and try to persuade him to sink money in a crazy scheme. And if Nash tries his game on Larramore, I promise you I'll stop it like a shot."

Hallie was offended. Briar was angry again by the time he came to the end of his ultimatum. His eyes flashed and his voice became shrill. He had the appearance of trying to overawe her with a show of temper, and she refused to be overawed. He was unquestionably sincere in his conviction; Briar would not descend to bluster. But she believed he was mistaken and self-deceived.

"But if *I* should try my game on Larramore, Briar?" she asked in a suspiciously calm voice.

Briar blinked at the unexpected attack. He gave her a searching look to determine if she were in earnest, but there could be no doubt.

He went white and he gulped nervously. Was this the

moment of crisis in their lives? He could n't say. He felt mentally blinded, and he could only grope. But there was only one thing he could say; compromise would have been unworthy a man. He faltered and his voice was low, but he spoke the words, "I'd be compelled to follow the same course."

Hallie disdained further talk. She turned to a magazine. Briar wandered into his den. He put his elbows on the table, resting his chin in his hands.

"I guess I've spilled the beans!" — smiling faintly at the slang. He was no longer angry, and he had lost his sudden sense of disaster. He felt numbed. Anything might happen. He did n't care.

CHAPTER XXII

HALLIE for once did not allow herself to look facts in the face. Anything seemed better than a return to the old *impasse* between her and Briar. Barry Junior was quite obviously falling in love with her, and Hallie often felt guilty. The boy was so helpless. The normal inhibitions of a normal man were lacking in him. It was impossible for him to hide his feelings. She was always dreading that he would do something foolish. There was considerable dynamite in her queer relations with Barry Junior, but that made it exciting. And Hallie needed excitement to help her forget that for her and Briar there was nothing ahead.

"It's no more than if Jack Steadfast should fall in love with me," she reassured herself. Barry Junior was about the same age mentally as Jack; that was proved by his being almost a chum of the younger boy.

But Hallie knew she was not being strictly honest with herself.

"It's all nonsense; all boys have these calf-infatuations with married women. It is n't as if it were Barry Senior. He's not a boy; *he*'s responsible."

But she felt uneasy. After all, she was exploiting Barry Junior for her own purposes. He was "material," but also he was a human being with human passions. And the fact that to Briar also he was merely "material" — scientific "material" — did not help matters. Briar was

not a woman, a beautiful woman — she smiled — that a silly boy could lose his head about. And Briar was honest about it. He did not pretend to care twopence about either one of the two Barrys as a human being. While she —

Her cheeks went red. No one knew anything in regard to what she was about. She found comfort in the argument that if the two Barrys and John Wesley had had an inkling of it, they would have been spoiled as "material." A thing like that could n't be revealed. But she had an uneasy feeling that for that very reason Briar would not have been capable of doing what she was engaged upon.

"But Briar's a scientist, while I —"

She was only pretending to be an artist. She supposed that had she been as genuinely the real thing in art as Briar was in science, she would have had no more scruples about exploiting Barry than he had. But she was a sham, a fraud. Art in reality did n't mean anything to her. Art was not life to her as science was to Briar. She merely flirted with art. To Briar science was the only reality. Hallie was too honest not to see the difference.

Barry Junior was at Carcassonne almost every evening. He would have come during the day also, when Briar was not at home, if Hallie had given him any encouragement. He took her to the dances at the "syndicate" hotel, Briar sometimes accompanying them, sometimes staying at home.

Briar was curiously silent, absorbed in the Barry problem. He either sat idle, his chin on his hands, or practiced marksmanship with Judge Kester's rifle — which, Hallie

knew, was a mere distraction from a too intense mental concentration.

Briar had never learned to dance, and when he went with Hallie and Barry to the hotel, he was merely an onlooker. Besides, the hotel was so near Carcassonne that it seemed most natural for Barry Junior and Hallie to stroll to it without Briar. Briar refused to attach any significance to it, even when the two went there night after night. He sometimes called for them, and the three would walk home under the stars, wading through the loose dune sand, Hallie stopping now and then to empty the sand out of her low shoes. Hallie would hold an arm of each and the men would pretend gayly to be dragging her along.

For Hallie it was life. She had been depressed entirely too long. Youth in her cried out for gayety. Most of the time she forgot completely that she was "studying" Barry Junior, and her book was not getting on. Somehow the things that were really significant she was too self-conscious to put into it, and it did not seem worth while to set down the merely inconsequent.

But this fact did not prevent her from spending as much time as ever with Barry. There seemed nothing else to do. Briar much of the time was almost a stranger; she supposed he was absorbed in the Barry case. It was shocking, but they seldom confided in each other any more.

She was conscious of playing with fire. But it was at least exciting. And clear-headed though she ordinarily was, she had not reckoned fully with the inflammable nature of Barry Junior's passion.

Barry Senior drove up in the big Larramore car one

night at dusk. He wanted to see Dr. Quentin, and not finding him at home, he elected to wait. It was warm in the house, and he and Hallie sat on the screened-in porch.

Barry Senior seemed excited or under a strain. He had begun to indulge in the wild hope that Dr. Quentin could cure him. There was an attitude of worship in his bearing toward Briar, while Barry Junior's attitude toward the doctor was one of suspicion.

Hallie was not in the mood to probe Barry Senior. She found herself wishing it was Barry Junior; he was much more comfortable to talk to than Senior. With Junior she could indulge in chaff; Senior almost never smiled.

She could think of nothing light to talk about. The humorless, sad man with his brooding face, sitting there in the shimmering darkness on the other side of the reed porch-table, was the victim of a fate that seemed almost more tragic to her than death. It was always Barry Senior she was sorry for. Tears almost came into her eyes as she sat there regarding him, romantic, strange, in the darkness.

Briar not returning, Barry Senior decided to go, and come again in the morning. They stood together beside the little table. Hallie's mood of pity was still strong upon her. Unconsciously she put her hand on his sleeve — an unpremeditated touch of sympathy.

Then a strange thing happened, and it happened with a blinding suddenness that left Hallie groping. Barry swung about, threw his arms around her, and, forcing her head back, kissed her passionately on the mouth — once, twice, three times.

Then she succeeded in getting her arms free, and put-

ting her hands protectingly up to her burning face, she struggled out of his embrace and stumbled to a chair, too weak with fright and astonishment to utter a single word.

Barry stood trembling. He realized suddenly what he had done.

"My God, what did I do-do!" bewildered.

A wave of relief swept over Hallie. The catch in his voice had betrayed Barry Junior. She rose resolutely.

"You had better go — immediately! No, don't try to explain. I understand. You woke up suddenly in the darkness and found me standing near you, touching you. And you had no time to control your impulses."

She put her hands up to her burning cheeks again.

When he still did not move, "Go, oh, go!"

Barry Junior stumbled down the steps to the automobile. He had the air of a man who has had a death sentence pronounced on him. He did not look back as he drove away.

But Barry Junior was not the person to remain away. He did not have strength enough. He was a boy, and like a boy he slunk back after a few days, with the air of one who has decided to take a spanking and then return to the old footing.

It was rather funny, and Hallie laughed. It would be ridiculous to hold him accountable like a full-grown man. He had had his lesson and he would behave himself after this. Also, she had had her lesson, and she would be more watchful after this. They did not refer to the episode, and as soon as Barry Junior understood that Hallie had not told Briar about it he became himself again. In a few days

he had forgotten the whole thing. Barry Junior was not the person to hold a grudge, nor was he the person to nurse a sense of shame. He lived for the moment. And Hallie for the time being did much the same thing. She would have been sorry if Barry Junior had been frightened away permanently. He was at least entertainment and distraction.

He took her out in his sailboat one day. The boat was a comparatively new toy and Barry Junior did not rest until she had consented to go with him.

They ventured out beyond the breakwater, and a sudden squall caught the sail. Perhaps Barry Junior, expert sailor though he was, was not paying attention. At any rate, he was not quick enough and the little craft capsized.

Hallie, struggling in the water, blessed Barry for having taught her to swim. Three strokes brought her to the side of the boat where it was easy to cling till the power boat of the life-saving station arrived. She heard the gong of the lookout almost as soon as she touched the water. She felt no panic. Barry was on one side of the boat, she on the other. Curiously he said not a word.

But the reason for this unaccountable silence appeared as soon as they were safely in the lifeboat. The shock had changed him into Barry Senior!

His brooding eyes were upon her. She read fear in them and shame.

And curiously she herself felt ashamed. To go sailing with Barry Junior was like going with Jack Steadfast. To be caught in an adventure with Barry Senior was —

She could not finish the sentence. Her eyes blinked in the sunshine. She was wringing the water out of her wet skirt nervously . . .

She could n't bring herself to tell Briar about the adventure. It was ridiculous, but she could n't.

But for several days she was more preoccupied than ever. Briar wondered.

In the old days there would have been no question about it; she would have described the misadventure as a matter of course, but her habit of withholding from Briar what was going on in her mind had been growing on Hallie. She had a feeling of having figured in something clandestine and it made her ashamed.

Also, it made her angry that she felt shame. She had done no wrong. Telling Briar would have a little the air of a confession, and that she could n't endure. Boating mishaps were frequent and no one would ever hear of this one. Briar was keeping things from her; what right had he to expect that she would tell him every little thing that happened to her?

But a week or two later Watson, the lookout, happening to meet Briar on the street, asked, "The wife all right after the ducking?"

Briar gave a start of surprise, but he recovered himself in time.

"Did n't affect her in the least," he answered at a venture. Then, to remove the impression that his look of astonishment might have made, "She's lucky to have a doctor for a husband," smiling.

"Well, of course, it was n't cold," admitted Watson;

"an' clean water don't hurt. . . . Young Barry got his sailboat in shape again?"

"Shipshape."

They drifted apart.

She had not told him! His milling brain came back to that again and again. That she had gone sailing with Barry was nothing; but after nearly drowning she had not told him.

There followed days of torture.

And then one night Briar learned how the relations of Hallie and Barry Junior were regarded by others. It was in the ballroom of the "syndicate" hotel. Hallie and Barry Junior were dancing. Briar sat smoking, idly watching the scene. Three men stood talking, hidden from him by a pillar. Hallie and Barry Junior had just passed by. Suddenly Briar realized that the men were discussing them.

"A stunning woman!" was the first he heard clearly.

"Yeah, Barry Junior's got good taste, even if he's a nut" — evidently with not unkindly intention, but open to rather damaging construction.

"Dr. Quentin's studying him" — in a tone as if the speaker was accompanying the words with a raising of the eyebrows.

"And he Mrs. Quentin!" Which produced a ripple of laughter.

"Can you blame her?" Another voice came to Hallie's defense; "he's a nut, but he knows how to provide a good time, and he's got the money to do it with, while Quentin's as poor as a church mouse. Barry's got a car and a sailboat and a launch and about everything you can

think of. And, believe me, Mrs. Quentin can take care of herself."

"Who says I was suggesting anything wrong?" — a little heatedly.

"Of course, I was n't saying that, but —"

"Regular triangle stuff," another voice interrupted.

"Triangle nothing! Quadrangle stuff: Barry goes double — three men and a girl!"

They drifted away. Briar balled up his fists. Then abruptly blood seemed to rush into his eyeballs and he had a brief vision of himself sighting along a rifle at a man's breast. No man in particular. For a moment he had an almost uncontrollable desire to kill somebody.

CHAPTER XXIII

On the way home through the sand Briar refused to talk. Hallie, as usual, had hold of Briar's arm on one side of her and of Barry's on the other. She made little jumps from time to time, allowing the men to swing her forward. She laughed and Barry laughed. But Briar did not respond and he preserved a gloomy silence. He felt a hundred years old. He felt out of it. Barry and Hallie had something that he did n't have. They shared in the freemasonry of youth, while he was old, old! And that angered him. He was as young as Barry, or nearly so. And he was at least a complete man, while Barry —

Involuntarily in the darkness his lips curled in contempt.

What of it if he could n't dance? All his life he had been too poor and too busy to learn. At college he had not been able to belong to clubs; he had not been able to afford a dress-suit. He did n't own one now. Why the devil should Hallie make so much of Barry's dancing? Give him, Briar, a hundredth part of Barry's time and money and he 'd learn in a week.

Hallie skipped along gayly.

"I should think you 'd had enough dancing in the ballroom!" He had not meant to say it and he was unreasonably surprised to hear his own voice. He had merely meant to form the thought silently, but the words pronounced themselves.

He felt Hallie's hand stiffen on his arm and she stopped

her gay little jumps. Barry also was abruptly quiet. Briar's voice had been harsher than he knew. He felt irritable. For a moment he had an almost uncontrollable desire to get his hands on Barry's throat.

"Of course if we disturb you," said Hallie evenly. But Briar felt the ice in the words.

And Briar became angrier and angrier as they walked on in silence. When Barry Junior had climbed into his car and turned it into the cindery road, Briar turned on Hallie: "This is the last time you'll drag me to a dance; I'm through."

"What's the matter with you?" Hallie's voice sounded dangerous, but Briar did n't care.

"I'm through," he repeated stubbornly.

"But I'm not."

"That's your affair."

"It most certainly is."

"But you'll have to find some one else to chaperon you. I tell you I'm through."

"Do you mean to say, Briar, that you're going to try to force me to stop dancing?"

"I'm not trying to force anything. I'm simply telling you what I won't do. If you want to make a fool of yourself with a young nincompoop who is too irresponsible to understand how people regard him, I can't stop you. You're not a child."

Hallie turned white. But her eyes blazed. "No, I'm not a child. And as to making a fool of one's self —"

But she broke off. She was suddenly conscious of something she did not understand. But she had said enough.

Briar had a sense of mentally wilting before her. What right had he to lay down the law to her, he who had failed in everything? What right had he to play dog-in-the-manger to Hallie, he who was not enough of a man to provide the things that belong to a woman as a matter of course?

All that he read in her look and in her cut-off sentence. And he had no answer. It was all true. But his anger did not leave him. "Do as you please," he said shortly, "but I'm through."

"That's your own affair," she quoted him. She too was trembling with anger.

They said no more. The next day he heard Hallie telephoning to Barry Junior to take her to the dance at the hotel. And he knew that she had deliberately waited until he was home to hear her. And that night Miss Steady and Rose drove up in the nurse's runabout and went with Barry and Hallie to the hotel.

But a few days later they were friends again, both rather ashamed of their flare-up. There were no explanations. Briar could not get himself to talk about what he had overheard in the ballroom. To confess that that had been at the bottom of his anger seemed a little shameful.

"If I'd been a real man I'd have punched their faces instead," he thought, and then he smiled. That's what they would have done in the movies, and he despised theatricality.

But their periods of mutual understanding were becoming briefer. Hallie was conscious of strain most of the time, and it was wearing her out. She came to a sudden resolve one day while talking to Miss Steady about Briar.

"He does n't know how to advertise, Hallie," the nurse was saying; "that's the big trouble with him. Some people are made that way. If everybody could learn to know him as I do, he'd be the biggest hit in Finley."

"And I've been no help to him. I've fallen down as much as he has. Oh, don't try to deny it, Miss Steady," when the nurse made a gesture of protest; "you know it's so. So many wives help their husbands — running the social end of it. Statesmen whose wives help them climb; and in the professions. Take Dr. Washburn's wife: she's a 'reader.' Gets in everywhere. Makes friends right and left. It counts — counts tremendously. While I — I bury myself at Carcassonne."

Miss Steady looked her surprise.

"You don't mean, Hallie, that —"

"Yes, I do," Hallie interrupted her. "Carcassonne was a mistake — delightful, but a mistake. If I could afford it I'd ask nothing better than Carcassonne, but I can't afford it. Living among the hills is a luxury, and poor people can't afford too many luxuries. I'm going to work. I'm going to start at my job of helping Briar win out."

Her eyes were brilliant. Miss Steady shook her head. But she expressed no opinion. The years had taught her wisdom.

A day or two later, happening to be in Dr. Quentin's office, she deliberately turned the talk to Hallie. Although she was wise, she was also rather curious. But Briar had nothing to say. He could not discuss Hallie even with Miss Steady. The nurse's questions had been innocent enough — a reference to Hallie's not looking so well; but

the motive back of the reference had not wholly escaped him. She would certainly be asking because she wanted to be of service, and he could n't resent even curiosity in her.

But after she had left, he stood for a long time in his favorite attitude in his private office, one foot on the wide window sill, elbow on knee, and his chin resting in the cup of his hand. Hallie should not have married him. It was a mistake, a terrible mistake — for her, not for him. She should have married the kind of man who did things. Not necessarily the wealthy man. He knew Hallie well enough for that. It was achievement she was after primarily, but she did not despise money. She was not one of those persons who try to make others believe they consider money so much dross, that they "are devoted to higher things." She would have been the first to ridicule that attitude. He smiled, recalling an incident in point.

"After all, don't you know, my dear, it is n't money that makes one happy," he had once overheard young Mrs. McAlter gush somewhat patronizingly and also platitudinously, to Hallie at a party at Nash's.

"No," Hallie had answered dryly, "but neither does the lack of it!" And Mrs. McAlter had appeared surprised. She had given expression to the same sentiment scores of times, and people had always agreed with her. It was such a comfortable subject to talk about.

"Anyway, what does she know about it?" Hallie had demanded indignantly afterwards; "loaded down with diamonds, then talk platitudes on the blessedness of poverty. It's always that kind!"

. . . But the man she should have married need not

necessarily have been wealthy. That was incidental. But he should have been the kind who forced himself to the front — a fighter who won. She would have gloried in him and spurred him on.

"While I!" He articulated the words as he looked down upon the brilliantly lighted street. Self-disgust brought a taste of bitterness on his tongue. She was discovering her mistake. And there was Barry —

He played idly with the idea of suicide. It was understood that it was no more than a mental game. Suicide under those conditions is sometimes rather pleasurable.

They would find him in his chair in his private office, his head lurching to one side. Hallie would be brought in later, after they had straightened the body. She would fall on her knees beside him and put her arms around him.

He would have left a magnanimous note. He had done it for love of her, to correct the mistake she had made in marrying him. She must forget him and marry the right man. And the tears would be dropping on the paper as she read, and she would come to see that he was after all bigger than any of them — that he had had the bigness to give his life for her. . . .

He caught himself at this point in the reverie.

"And then sit up and call the suicide off!" he articulated ironically. "What a confounded sentimentalist I am, after all!"

That evening Hallie broached her plan, or as much of it as she deemed it wise for Briar to know.

"We can't stay on here, Briar. It's time to get back to town where people are."

Briar was taken by surprise.

"But I thought you loved the place!"

"I did," with a faint emphasis on the verb; "but it is n't good for us to stay on here. There's no use hiding it; the truth is we're getting on each other's nerves."

Briar protested, but Hallie refused to argue with him.

"No use denying it, I do get on your nerves. I can see it in your eyes, in the way your body stiffens. Sometimes the mere way I rumple a newspaper rasps you so you would like to swear."

"But I don't," Briar laughed.

"I'd rather you would!"

They both laughed. The little interchange of pleasantries made them feel better.

"And of course you get on *my* nerves." It had almost the force of a joke now. They had suddenly returned to a footing of intimacy. These moments, precious now, sometimes came without warning, as did Barry Larramore's transformation into his twin personality.

He stood by her chair and pressed her head against his coat. "I suppose it is rather dull for you here all day."

She wanted to cry out, "Oh, no, no, I love it!" But she repressed the impulse. It would n't do. She contented herself with saying, "It 's better for us to get back to people."

She heard him sigh. She wanted to get up from her chair and put her arms around him, but she remained where she was. That was not the way to help him.

"I want to get into things," she said.

He did not understand. She knew he would not.

"Social affairs, clubs, and all that kind of thing," she explained.

"Good Lord!"

Hallie smiled. She had expected him to say just that. She knew how acutely distasteful "all that kind of thing" was to him. He loved a little intimate gathering occasionally — a half-dozen people or so, good friends all — with cards, or just good talk; men smoking. But "social affairs, clubs," Good Lord! He abominated clubs, and he persistently refused to join them. He was not a "joiner."

"I suppose I'm an anti-social animal" — half hoping she would enter a denial.

"It's not your strong point," she admitted. "But we've been living too much to ourselves. We're in a rut. We've got to see something of people and have people see something of us."

It was all so reasonable. No man in his senses could raise an objection. After all, if a young wife — still almost a girl — wanted to see something of people, what could he say? They had been happy here at Carcassonne at one time, but it was doubtless true that he was getting on her nerves. He was no longer necessary to her. It was a bitter pill, but he swallowed it. He faced the truth because he could not do anything else.

If the baby had lived, everything might have been different. It would have helped to fill her life. But in her secret soul she was blaming him for its death: he felt sure of it. She must feel that everything he was connected with failed. And now she wanted to get into the whirl of things to find in it what he could not give her.

He sighed regretfully, thinking of the days that were gone. There was nothing to say.

CHAPTER XXIV

The first thing Hallie did when they were once more settled in a house in Finley was to form an alliance with her brother-in-law, John P. Nash.

"You offered once to get us into the P.E.O. Club."

Nash was all eagerness. He admired Hallie immensely.

"You bet I did, and that offer goes any time you say the word."

Hallie was touched. It would be much harder now to get her and Briar in than it would have been when he first made the proposal. Then Briar had been still on trial, as it were, while now he was definitely looked upon as a failure. And the P.E.O. Club did not like to have failure in any form associated with it. It would take a certain courage for John P. Nash to propose their names. She understood this thoroughly, and she had a good deal of admiration for the man.

Nash waved her fears aside.

"Nonsense, Hallie, leave it to me. If you think you'd like to see a little of Finley's élite, I'll engineer it for you. It may take a little time, but I'll find a way. So you've had enough of the hermit life?"

"For a while, yes. You get out of touch with people and things out there alone. It has been wonderful, though."

She had to say that much in the interest of sincerity.

"Each one to his taste," Nash agreed tolerantly; "it would bore me stiff inside half an hour. I want to be where

there's something doing. But Briar's always been a great hand for going off by himself, ever since he was a kid."

Hallie smiled. To a man like Nash a boy like Briar must have been incomprehensible. And the man Briar must be more incomprehensible still.

"But you've got the right idea, Hallie," he enthused over her proposal. "I told Briar that years ago when he first started — he's got to go in for things. It don't matter what, anything to keep himself before the people — get people to notice him. Make him join a few lodges, Hallie, and get him into the First Presbyterian Church; get him to go in for talks; get him into touch with the Chamber of Commerce; have him join the Social Uplift Society — anything. You can do it."

Hallie laughed. John P. Nash was so completely unconscious of insincerity. He took it for granted that any sensible man would do any or all of these things for business reasons, whether he cared for them or not.

"I can see Briar doing all that," she smiled. And yet something like that is what she had set out to bring about. For a moment doubts assailed her.

She had common sense enough to understand that it could not be done in Nash's way. It needed subtler handling. All she could hope to do at first was to do her own part, and perhaps later Briar would naturally take an interest in what was occupying the minds of Finley's "best people" and incidentally helping to keep them as individuals more or less in the public eye. If people could only learn to know him as she and Miss Steady knew him — his mental honesty, the funny little twists in his nature,

his capacity for real comradeship, his deep sympathy with all that was genuinely helpless, and his scorn for "front"! Even if he could not learn the tricks of the game, she must try to help him.

"You can do it," Nash answered her confidently; "and you can count on me."

Hallie almost had a feeling of being in a conspiracy with her brother-in-law against her husband. She laughed; it was funny.

And this sense of conspiracy was heightened by her absorption in her story. There were times when she was really excited about "Double-Edged." She had to work on it clandestinely, and once or twice Briar had almost caught her at it; she had hardly had time to lock the thing away, and she had had a guilty look when he came in. He had been plainly puzzled. And it had induced in him one of his dark moods that lasted for days — why Hallie could not understand. After all, she had a right to a private preoccupation as much as he. She slightly resented his attitude.

The election of Dr. and Mrs. Briar Quentin to membership in the P.E.O. Club was one of the greatest triumphs in the life of John P. Nash. He loved to be regarded as a "power in Finley," and what could better demonstrate his power than this? He had brought about the almost impossible.

He ran up to Briar's office with the news. The nominating committee had just had a meeting and they had decided in favor of Dr. and Mrs. Quentin. Their favorable report on a name was always equivalent to an election.

And John P. Nash could n't wait. He was bursting with triumph. It was late in the afternoon, and Dr. Quentin was about ready to go home.

Nash slapped his brother-in-law on the back.

"Congratulate yourself, you're in!" he cried; "the powers have spoken! You're in, by George!"

Briar was astonished by the sudden onslaught. And what was the joke? But he laughed at a venture.

"Of course I'm in, but if you keep on busting my backbone, I'll be out quick enough."

Nash roared with exaggerated merriment. He and Briar had not been any too friendly the past few weeks, and Nash was anxious to remove an unfavorable impression he might have made. That was a wrong move he had made trying to get at old Larramore through Briar. He should have worked through Hallie in the first place.

"Pretends he don't know what I'm talking about," he gayly addressed an imaginary third person, "and all the time he'd give his eye-tooth to hear all about it."

"What the devil is he talking about?" Briar inquired of himself.

"Did you know the nominating committee was holding their session this afternoon? I did n't say anything about it — did n't want to put you and Hallie on needles and pins. It's a pretty ticklish proposition — all kinds of elements to pacify and conciliate, and you're never quite sure till the trick is turned. It takes a darn lot of wire-pulling and maneuvering, I assure you." John P. Nash was exalting himself by piling on the difficulty. He was in deadly earnest now, all jocularity forgotten.

And it rasped on his nerves when Briar laughed.

"They've elected you and Hallie, I'm telling you," he said somewhat sharply.

"Yes, what to?"

John P. Nash lost his temper. This was too much. He had done his best to be on good terms with Briar, but a man had his own self-respect to consider. He shot an angry look at his brother-in-law.

"Aw, go to hell!" he exploded, and turning on his heel, he shot out of the room.

Hallie enlightened Briar as soon as he arrived home. Nash had telephoned and she had graciously flattered him, restoring his wounded self-esteem.

"He was trying to tell you we've been elected to the P.E.O. Club."

Briar looked his amazement. Was it a joke? But Hallie was evidently stating plain fact.

"I kept it a secret from you that John P. Nash was trying to get us in," she said evenly, but Briar was not sure he did not see a suggestion of a smile in her eyes; "afraid the suspense would wear you out!"

The irony was obvious now and Briar felt more comfortable.

"Your thoughtfulness saved my life, I'm sure," but it sounded clumsy to him.

"But really, Briar" — seriously now — "you're unjust to John P. He moved heaven and earth for us. He's got a kind heart and he wants to help us along. I for one am grateful."

"And you want to accept?" And before she could

answer, "But that's a fool question. You asked him to get us in, of course."

"Of course I did," with a slight suggestion of defiance; "I told you I'm going in for things."

There was nothing he could say. Hallie was entirely reasonable and he was preposterously unreasonable, or he would be if he made the slightest objection. But it was a confounded nuisance, especially just now. He was so full of the Barry Larramore case that there seemed room for nothing else in his mind. He was like a hound on the trail of a rabbit, and he was fearful of losing the scent. Not that the P.E.O. Club would take much time. Anyway, it was n't time he was pressed for. He had plenty of it. But it was the distraction of it — going in for something new at a critical moment. And the P.E.O. was but an opening wedge, he understood. Hallie would be lugging him to all kinds of things. He could n't see what in the world had got hold of her. He was shy in a crowd of people, and it was often agony for him to engage in social amenities which some men seemed to regard a pleasure.

But that was not important; the Barry case was important. His mind was a queer jumble of contradictions in regard to Barry. Personally he had a distinct feeling of hostility toward Barry and Barry toward him, at least Barry Junior; but scientifically there was no other person on earth more interesting to him.

The whole confounded business would be a sort of half-consciously realized worriment all the time, just enough to keep him feeling uncomfortable. And the fine mental

balance he needed for the Barry case would be all shot to smithereens.

A lively whirl in Finley society was just the one thing he did not want; and of all times Hallie had chosen the worst. He wanted an opportunity to think. There was an answer to the Barry riddle, but the answer was not to be picked up in a day or in a month. It might take years. He did n't care. He would find it if let alone.

He knew it would have to be an act of creative imagination. He 'd have to be a poet, by thunder, create a human mind — live the life of the two Barrys he knew, to get at the life of the Barry who had been. Old John Wesley Larramore could tell him something of the old Barry — the original Barry — but even a father could do no more than tell what had appeared on the surface. He had little to tell of the mind-life of the actual Barry. Dr. Quentin had long talks with John Wesley, neglecting no avenue of approach to the problem, and the two men had become intimate, but the method was comparatively barren of results. He must *live* Barry from time to time — both Barrys — put himself into the other man's skin, as it were, in order to get at the secret. He must identify his own mind with Barry's, amalgamate the two, make them function as one. He must eavesdrop, as it were, on Barry's mind, and in that way re-create the original Barry, first imaginatively and later in actual fact. The two personalities must coalesce, and he must find the secret that would make them flow together. For neither Barry Junior nor Barry Senior was the real Barry, though both thought they were.

Hypnotism helped some, but that, too, like the memory

of Barry's father, gave but hints. Dr. Quentin employed it to some extent, but it was at best only a rather clumsy tool. Subtler methods were needed. Also, Barry Junior objected to being hypnotized. He was beginning to be curiously hostile to the young doctor — suspicious, as if he was afraid Dr. Quentin would suppress him in favor of Barry Senior. Besides, it was a nuisance, and Barry Junior wanted to have a good time. Barry Junior secretly suspected that Dr. Quentin and Barry Senior were in league against him. The preposterous and half-guilty feeling even obtruded itself that Dr. Quentin "had it in for him," Barry Junior, because of Hallie. For he and Hallie were together a great deal. She was splendid. She was glorious. She liked him, he knew. There was no other woman in the world like her, and Dr. Quentin did n't half appreciate her. He was a stick-in-the-mud. Barry Junior was contemptuous. He supposed Barry Senior was just as prosy as the doctor and that that was the reason the latter wanted to suppress him, Junior, and make Senior permanent.

And Barry Senior had somewhat the same notion, which notion Dr. Quentin encouraged; it helped him to gain his ends. But to the boy's father the doctor sometimes confessed laughingly, "Barry Senior's no more real than Barry Junior; they're both only parts of a real personality."

And all this was a job that could not be done at odd moments. It would take all of him, Dr. Quentin knew — all of him perhaps for years. It was n't a plumber's job; it was a little more like God's job. The thought was not

irreverent. Dr. Quentin respected the creative impulse back of such a piece of work. There was a dignity about it that made it worth while, as distinguished from the carpentering and guessing that made up a great deal of his usual work. This is what he had dreamed of years ago when he went hungry to acquire an education that would make him a doctor. He had had the healer's instinct, which is the creative instinct, impregnated with a dignity as great as the creative instinct of Homer or of Shakespeare. This had always been what he had meant by Achievement. This was life!

And now, when he was at last on the trail of something real, Hallie was starting this society racket. It would upset him at a time when he must throw every ounce of his reserve powers into his fight.

If he had naturally liked that kind of thing it would have been different. He had no fault to find with those who found pleasure that way. If he had liked it and felt at home in it . . .

"But what's the use? I would n't have been I then!"

And what he was — actually — alone counted.

If he had not been a lover of the earth, of objectivity, of all things "real," if he had not had a passion for geology, for hunting "specimens," for a stone because it is a stone — hard, tangible, objective — he would not have been who he was — a different ego. It would all have been enormously different. The whole thing which was he was one; all went together. He could n't make it clear even to himself, but he knew that all of him went to the making of the kind of physician who could do work like the re-creating

of the personality of Barry Larramore. His love for the earth was part of it, just as his knowledge of hypnotism was part of it. The emotions that made him exult were a part of him as physician; they were involved in the act of healing as much as was his technical knowledge of medicine. His whole life was an agent of medical creative energy . . .

"Of course I did," Hallie was saying. "It's time we came out of our shells a little. We've been regular hermits. And the P.E.O. Club will be an opening for other things."

"Of course," said Briar, but not with exultation, with resignation rather.

Hallie refused to be too serious.

"Oh, come, Briar, you are n't being led to execution. Most young couples would jump at the chance that is being offered us."

Briar once more was paying the penalty of failure. Had he been on the way to making a mark for himself he could have burst out, "I've got work to do — can't be wasting my time in that kind of social froth." But he could not imagine himself saying that to Hallie now. No time! What else did he have but time?

"We'll have to have evening clothes," said Hallie. It was rather exciting; she had been busy planning ever since Nash telephoned. Of course it would come a little hard in the present state of their finances; but evening clothes would be a good investment. Hallie was ready to sink some money into her scheme. Briar also must have a new coupé. He could n't afford one as splendid as Dr.

Washburn's, but he must put up a better show than he was doing.

"You'll look beautiful in a dress-suit," she encouraged him, to chase away the gloom from his eyes. "I just know you will. You're built for one, not fat like Dr. Washburn." Hallie was always somewhat vindictive regarding Washburn. Pure envy, she always admitted frankly.

But Briar did n't care a whoop whether he was made for evening clothes or not. If go he must, he'd prefer to go in the clothes that would make him least conspicuous. Finley at this time was beginning to go in for full dress. A decade ago a dress-suit had been somewhat of a novelty, but now it was different. A number of men who prided themselves on being democratic, but who in reality were merely timid about adopting anything new (to them) in clothes, still clung to the sack coat at social gatherings. But they were for the most part substantial men who had plenty of money. They could do as they liked, while Dr. Quentin knew he and Hallie would be under observation. And for that reason he followed the instinct for self-protection of the bird that assumes the coloring of its surroundings. The plain fact was, Briar was shy, and the kind of life Hallie was proposing to enter was a real ordeal to him. It would upset him and interfere seriously with the delicate work he had launched upon.

"You think you'll enjoy it, Hallie?" It had almost the force of an appeal. But Hallie hardened her heart. It would not do to weaken now.

"Of course I will" — very positively.

He had a curious sinking of the heart. Hallie seemed

permanently hardened. This plunge into gayety, was it a silent confession that she had ceased to love him, that she needed a substitute for love? The two of them no longer shared each other's thoughts. And always there was Barry —

Briar's hand, after dinner, instinctively went up to the Dostoyevski shelf, but he thought better of it. He pretended that he had a call to make. Backing his old roadster out of his garage, he headed it for Carcassonne.

And he stood for hours on the one-span concrete bridge that the "syndicate" had built across his and Jack's gully, leaning his elbows on the railing, as had become a habit with him.

For the first time he felt that he had definitely lost Hallie — the real Hallie. It was the bitterest experience of his life so far. The thought of suicide returned, but he repressed it instantly. What he was passing through was no make-believe matter. It was too genuine for play-acting.

CHAPTER XXV

The sensation of that winter's season in Finley was not the entrance of the Quentins into the social life of the town, but the entrance of Barry Larramore. The Quentins did not make more of a stir than Briar could help. A good many people thought of him as a queer nut. They simply did n't know how to take him. His slim figure was a rather handsome one in his new dress-suit; Dr. Quentin's clothes always had an air of belonging to him. He looked a good deal of a gentleman, it was privately admitted. But he took pains to be as little in evidence as circumstances would allow. He had a knack of hiding himself in a crowd. He talked pleasantly enough, but his roving eyes often had an absent look that baffled people.

Hallie was different at the "functions" that she and Briar frequented. She made an effort. And she appeared to be enjoying herself. Besides, Mrs. Quentin had charm, people agreed. She did not sing or play; she did not have the accomplishments that get other women on programmes, but there was something about her. The democratic business men of Finley liked her.

"She's got sense, by George!" They discussed her up in smoking-rooms.

"And she's got the sand to tell you what she thinks," contributed another. "She'll disagree with you like that!" snapping his fingers — "no fussy lady talk; hits straight from the shoulder; not always trying to be just so nice."

In other words, he was trying to say she had personality.

But these were mere asides. The Quentins were not often under discussion. Finley society had quickly assimilated them; and outside of deploring that a fine woman like Mrs. Quentin did n't have an easier time financially, people took them for granted.

But Barry Larramore was quite another thing.

"Which one is it to-night?" was the stock joke when his well-built figure passed upstairs to the room where the men laid off their topcoats. And the stock answer was, "The kid, as usual, I expect."

Interest in Barry was perennial. He had never entered much into the social life of the town. He had always been classed with the youths, but this winter he was trying to act grown-up, to the great amusement of those who knew him. Besides, people were always looking for one of those sudden transformations. Few had ever witnessed one, and all were secretly hoping they would be around when Barry Junior suddenly became transformed into Barry Senior. But it almost never happened. People were always hearing about it, but they were never on the ground.

Dr. Quentin gained some notoriety from the fact that he was credited with being able to change this Dr. Jekyll into Mr. Hyde almost at will through hypnosis. But no one had the courage to ask Dr. Quentin to perform the experiment for private amusement.

It was almost invariably "the kid," that is, Barry Junior, who appeared at these social gatherings. Men in smoking-rooms got a good deal of fun out of guessing how

he managed to get his invitations. John P. Nash, they knew, was responsible for some of them, either directly or indirectly; and some of the Finley business men were not unaware of John P.'s designs on old Wesley Larramore's bank book. And when Barry once began to come, the thing regulated itself and invitations became almost automatic. He was a funny duffer, of course, and you could n't exactly take him seriously, but he was the great John Wesley Larramore's son, of the Larramore Farms and of the famous Larramore iron mines. If he took it into his head to cultivate Finley, Finley could n't ignore him, if only for his father's sake. And Barry did n't cut a bad figure himself, with the funny little catch in his voice.

Barry was as much at the Quentins in their house in town as he had been at Carcassonne. Barry Junior was not unconscious of Briar's almost involuntary hostility, but he ignored it with the care-free irresponsibility of a boy. Hallie was always cordial, that was all he cared about. He was glad they were in town; there were many more opportunities now to see her.

If Hallie ever had misgivings, she easily disposed of them by means of "Double-Edged." She was not really working at the book, at least not often, but she pretended to herself she was gathering impressions. She could n't see too much of Barry Junior. If he was amusing and took her mind off the shabby affairs of herself and Briar, so much the better. But that was only incidental.

A number of times it was Barry instead of Briar who brought Hallie to the P.E.O. meetings. And Finley was

still sufficiently provincial, for all of its claims to sophistication, to raise its eyes at such goings-on.

"He practically lives there." Men discussed the subject in the smoking-room.

And though not a word of all this reached Briar, he was not unconscious of an atmosphere of half-amused, half-scandalized interest on the part of Finley.

He broke out in exasperation.

"Oh, for God's sake, Hallie, why don't you let up on the young fool? Can't you see what people are thinking?"

Hallie stiffened, but she did not lose her temper.

"I always supposed you wanted as many opportunities as possible to study him. I'm trying to help you."

It was not without its flavor of malice, and Hallie felt slightly guilty. As for what people might be thinking, she did not take Briar seriously there. That was silly. If Barry could n't be a friend of the family for fear of what people would say, then there was n't any freedom left. Besides, she was "studying" Barry. Secret though that was, it was nevertheless real. And Briar was "studying" him openly. In short, any such fears were silly.

"If Barry's willing to come and take us to doings in a limousine, I'm not going to ruin my clothes by driving in a dirty roadster, and all for a silly reason like that."

Once again Briar was silenced. Dr. Washburn and his wife drove a limousine, and Dr. Washburn had been in practice in Finley a year less than Briar and had had fewer advantages to begin with.

Hallie was unconscious of the hurt she was inflicting.

"I should think," she continued evenly, "that for a scientist silly things like that would n't count.".

She would not have said it if she could have gauged what effect it would have on Briar. He jumped up, his eyes blazing. There seemed to be in him a physical hunger to destroy. For a moment Hallie was afraid of him. But he did not vent his rage on her. With eyes unseeing and mind not recording what he was doing, he seized one of his precious Dostoyevski volumes lying open on his knees, ripped it from end to end with a savage wrench, threw the fragments on the floor, and dashed out of the room.

If he could only get his hands on Barry! For the second time in the past few months he had an uncontrollable desire to feel his fingers on the other man's windpipe — the primitive passion of the savage that underlay the civilized man and the scientist.

And the scientist!

He had an abrupt sense of mental collapse. That 's why Hallie's mildly malicious gibe had roused the beast in him. He was allowing his personal life to wreck the scientist in him. And the scientist in him was the only reason for existence. He was conscious of having let his hostility toward Barry Junior as a human being interfere with his work of solving the problem of Barry as a "case." It would never do. It was treason. He was not getting on with his problem, and the reason was, he did not have the scientist's detachment. And Hallie was, of course, right: he was making a mountain out of a mole-hill.

He began to be afraid of himself. He had never suspected that he was capable of the unreasoning passion to

which he had just yielded. Would it all end some day in a sordid tragedy, the kind that the sob-writers in the newspapers delight in: two men fighting for a woman — a gun or a knife — or the blow of a skull against a stone wall — silence — a jail — sentimentalism — tears of stranger women in a crowded court-room?

He smiled. He, Dr. Briar Quentin, could never figure in anything like that, if for no other reason than that he abhorred sensationalism and melodrama.

And yet —

A moment ago he had lost control of himself as completely as a madman. And for no real reason. And suppose Hallie —

"Before I know it, I'll be a Dostoyevski character myself," he mocked himself. He understood his own thought processes. He could almost see the brain convolutions shaping themselves to form the fixed idea. He knew all the steps and he was prepared for all the surprises. But a curious fact was that the surprises that had been anticipated were surprises none the less. They came upon him with the same impact of astonishment with which they strike the mind that is all unconscious of their approach.

He had a sense often of being unreal — another personality — that he was watching this other duffer whose wife was going back on him. There was a certain excitement, almost an intellectual pleasure sometimes, in watching him suffer. The fellow was in the grip of an idea that was wholly fantastic. Dr. Quentin knew that, but the other fellow did n't. He took it for "straight goods," as his friend Jack Steadfast would phrase it. Gradually the idea would

obsess him more and more, and it would finally become a conviction as of something proved and demonstrated — an hypothesis become a fact. But the other fellow could n't be expected to understand this.

Dr. Quentin caught himself up here.

"Why, you poor boob, you *are* the other fellow!"

He looked at himself in the mirror. His face was haggard.

"This will never do. I've got to stay completely sane."

A curious thought came to him: Barry Larramore had been through this same thing. Briar became convinced of it as soon as the thought came.

"If I don't watch myself, there'll be a Briar Junior and a Briar Senior — or I'll go off my nut entirely."

But meanwhile he grasped eagerly at the chance to study ancient secrets. And every bit of information automatically fitted itself to the problem of Barry that was never entirely absent from his mind.

"People have gone mad while revealing madness to others. Who knows, perhaps I —"

But he did n't care. Nothing mattered in view of this new business about Hallie. He'd just as lief be a Barry Larramore; or better yet, a "case" in an institution who believed himself to be King Priam of Troy or Julius Cæsar. Madness probably was not as unpleasant as sanity.

"Although, of course, this about Hallie is n't a fact; you're — no, I'm — merely trying to imagine how it would feel if it were a fact."

But it made the pain no less sharp that he was able to analyze it. And, amazingly, it made his belief in the fact no less strong that he knew it was not true!

CHAPTER XXVI

The comedy in the situation was, if it could have been regarded by them with detachment, that Hallie was not working at "Double-Edged" and Briar was not getting on with the problem of Barry Larramore's dissociated personality; yet both were pretending to themselves to be "studying" Barry. And Barry Junior's only aim was to enjoy himself. He was in love with Hallie and he sincerely hoped Briar would break his neck some day. But until something like that should happen, he would see as much of Hallie as he could. Barry Senior, he knew, was high-minded and full of ideas of honor; but Barry Junior frankly despised Barry Senior, except at such times when the fear gripped him that some day Dr. Quentin and Barry Senior should succeed in "suppressing" him, Junior.

Things ran along like this into the following summer. The Quentins were spending a few weeks at Carcassonne again. Hallie admitted to herself that the excursion into the life of Finley had been a complete failure, so far as Briar was concerned. He could not be helped in that way. And looking back she saw that he was incapable of "success" in the usual sense of that word. And she saw nothing else ahead. She had no faith in his study of the Barry case. She was without hope. All her grandiose dreams had ended in this. . . .

Briar rushed home in his roadster in the middle of the afternoon. He had dismissed his patients in the waiting-

room, pretending a life-and-death call. He was under intense excitement.

"Hallie!" he cried. His hand trembled on the knob of the door at Carcassonne. "Hallie!"

No one answered. He ran to the kitchen. She would be there. He must tell her. It was the crowning moment of his life. He had made his great discovery. He had answered the riddle. All the rest was a matter of mere detail. Barry's secret was out. He, Briar, had learned it. He had turned the trick, by thunder. For months he had not consciously tried, and suddenly, unannounced, while he was treating a thin, lank professor for constipation (even in his excitement he was conscious of the humor of that fact), the secret revealed itself. It came like that! — A flash and it was over. And in that moment of time there had been created for Briar a new heaven and a new earth.

And the first need of his nature was to tell Hallie — justify himself at last in her eyes. It was a moment he had lived for and suffered for.

"Hallie!" he called again. The kitchen was empty, and there was a curious silence in the house. Looking out the window he saw Barry's car standing in the shade on the other side of the house.

Barry Larramore — it was Barry Senior to-day — and Hallie were sitting in the clean dune sand on the slope of the Crownéd Monarch, within clear view of Carcassonne.

It was not often that Hallie had a chance to talk to Barry Senior. She wondered if it had been Barry Junior who had started out and if Senior had "emerged" on the road to Carcassonne. The probabilities were in favor of

this supposition. But she could not ask Senior. It was never easy to talk to him about his affliction. As a rule it was best to ignore Barry Senior's other self.

Barry Senior talked mines and iron. The subject was always an absorbing one to him, as it was to his father. He became technical and he was completely unconscious of being dull. He had been on the same subject earlier in the afternoon, when he had first arrived, and Hallie had proposed the walk to the Crownéd Monarch to get him off the theme. But once seated in the sand he began again.

Hallie listened half-heartedly. The thought flashed through her mind that here was a chance to get material for "Double-Edged." But she banished it with distaste. It seemed slightly shameful to be spying on Barry Senior. She never had that feeling toward Barry Junior. And she wondered why.

Junior was unquestionably more amusing than Senior. Hallie was conscious of a feeling of loneliness.

She wondered how much power she had over Senior. Ever since the night last summer on the porch she had been careful. It had been quite simple to keep Junior in check, as simple as if he had been Jack Steadfast; and Senior she had not disturbed.

"I wonder," she thought, and the thought abruptly transformed itself into a temptation.

A touch of her hand had done it that time on the porch.

And suppose he did — well —

She broke off, her cheeks flushed. It was rather exciting. A queer game with a thrill in it. And thrills had

gone out of her life. There would never be any more thrills. That was at an end for her.

"You see, Mrs. Quentin," Barry Senior was saying in his slightly stilted way, "it's hematite, or ferric oxide — Fe_2O_3 — that gives the color to red sandstones and some other rocks, the —"

But she was not listening. Suppose he did take her in his arms — Barry Junior, when he "woke up" and found himself sitting on the side of the Crownéd Monarch with her hand in his. Suppose he did!

He was merely a boy. It would be absurd to be angry with Barry Junior. He was not responsible. And it would be exciting, especially now that she was in control of the situation. That other time she had been taken by surprise. This was more like a game.

She wondered if that was hypnotism, the queer power she felt over Barry Senior. Briar had never explained hypnotism satisfactorily to her, and he had always refused to demonstrate his power merely for the sake of furnishing amusement. He seemed to regard that as immoral. Though Briar was something of an authority on the subject, she had never actually seen a person hypnotized. Briar was so much of a scientist that he often forgot he was a man — and she a woman. A girl, rather, who was eager for excitement. Anything was better than the dull hopelessness that hung over her most of the time.

"Yes, yes, Mr. Larramore, I understand that perfectly," she was saying when he insisted that it was hematite that gave color to sandstones, but she hardly knew what he was talking about. "Suppose we go take a look at the lake."

She made a movement to arise . . .

Briar, standing in the kitchen doorway of Carcassonne, saw Barry rising from the sand and giving his hand to Hallie to help her to her feet. The joy had gone out of the day for Briar. Barry's car, in the shade of the house, had an air of being in hiding, as if placed there deliberately so it would not be noticed by a chance passer-by. . . .

"Of course, if you'd rather, Mrs. Quentin," and Barry's hand was out to help her.

And at that moment temptation came to Hallie. She held him with her eyes, a little smile on her lips.

She saw a frightened look come into Barry Senior's serious face.

And then it happened. His arms were about her and his lips were on her throat, searching desperately for her face.

For a moment she did not move, yielding herself to the thrill of it. She had put her power to the test. . . .

To Briar watching in the doorway the world came to an end. To his own astonishment he found Mr. Kester's rifle in his hands. He had not been conscious of snatching it from its wooden pegs on the wall.

Yet he was abnormally calm now. He was in what Hallie had often mocked as a "scientific mood."

He knew he was a good shot.

He must not tremble. His aim must be absolutely certain. There must be no waste of motion. He must keep himself under complete control. As soon as Hallie and Barry moved far enough apart . . .

At that moment Barry Larramore was very near death.

Hallie pushed Barry Junior from her — gently. Now

that it had happened she was ashamed. After all, he was not responsible and she was. She tried to sound stern.

"Behave yourself, Barry!"

But he was not impressed.

"I woke-woke up just in time," with an impertinent smile. They were standing close together. . . .

Briar sighted along the rifle. There was a gleam of madness in his eyes, but his hand holding the barrel of the gun was extraordinarily steady. . . .

"Don't forget your hat."

Hallie was trying desperately to be matter-of-fact, but her heart was beating with strange intensity. Barry's hat was lying a few feet away in the sand. . . .

Briar's finger was on the trigger.

And again abruptly, as once before, he had a sense of mental collapse. It was as if he had been insane for a moment, and had but just returned to sanity. His eyes wavered and his hand trembled.

Barry was several feet away from Hallie now, but Briar lowered the rifle.

"My God!" he thought. The sweat stood on his forehead.

A moment later Hallie and Barry had moved out of range, on their way to the lake.

The scientist in Briar had conquered the man. Briar could have killed Barry, the man, but he could not kill Barry, the "case."

And he despised himself for it. He was not a real man. A real man would have acted, while he —

But his insanity had not spent itself. If he must save

Barry, the "case," alive, he must get his fingers on the throat of Barry, the man.

Rushing to his car he climbed in and stepped vigorously on the self-starter.

A half-mile away he threw in the brakes and came to a halt in the middle of the road. Nothing could pass him there. The big Larramore car would have to stop. He would drag Barry from the driver's seat and they would have it out like two savages, with bare hands.

He nursed his hatred carefully. It was all that was left now to prove himself a man.

Perhaps three quarters of an hour passed . . .

When Barry's car stopped with its front bumper almost touching the tail-light of the roadster, Briar braced himself. He had the exultant feeling of a tiger about to spring.

Barry jumped out.

"What in the world, Dr. Quentin —"

There was friendly recognition as well as astonishment in his face.

Briar's hands fell to his sides. It was Barry Senior speaking to him.

Briar gulped and the flames died out of his eyes. He could not attack this quiet, sad man.

"I'll drive on to let you pass," he said lamely to tide over the awkward moment.

And climbing into his roadster he drove away without further explanation. Barry Senior wondered.

CHAPTER XXVII

Much had been going on under the surface of things that the general run of people in Finley were not aware of. John P. Nash had been out of the city a great deal, attending meetings in Chicago. They were understood to be connected with the "syndicate" hotel, and the general impression was that things were going rather prosperously with that institution, whatever might be true of the resort that had been built around it (on paper in richly decorative prospectuses). John P. Nash was, of course, the attorney for the "syndicate." For all practical purposes, so far at least as Finley was concerned, Nash was the "syndicate." He frequently appeared in interviews in the "Herald" about the plans of the "syndicate," the prospects for growth, what it would mean to Finley when the "syndicate" got into its real stride, etc.

But things had been going on under the surface. For one thing, there was a feeling that Nash was "in deep." There was no tangible proof for this, but there are many things that don't require tangible proof. A man of Nash's temperament does not mortgage for all it will carry his new show place of a house, into the very stones of which his heart's pride has been built. He was known to be a heavy borrower at the Finley banks, and some one discovered by chance that at least one of the large Sisson banks had also extended him credit to a substantial amount. That money, of course, was somewhere, and

those who were at all cognizant of what was going on had a feeling that amounted to a conviction that every cent of it was in the "syndicate" project. To Bunson and the general public John P. Nash was the attorney for the "syndicate" and the owner of a "slice" of the stock, with some holdings in resort lots. A few of those who really understood things had a strong suspicion that practically Nash and the "syndicate" had come to be synonymous.

They did not absolutely know this, but they understood how it must have been. Nash was shrewd, but there were other shrewd men in the world. And Nash's shrewdness was after all more or less provincial. Finley was his world, his whole field of operations. He could match wits with any one in Finley, but it was doubtful if he had the grasp, the scope of mind, that these "syndicate" people were likely to have. He had followed the lure of big things during the early days of the project and had bought up the holdings of the more timid ones. There had probably been reorganizations and re-reorganizations, and Nash had plunged on and on, and had been more surprised than pleased when he was up against the necessity of mortgaging his house and raising money by hook or crook to protect the money he had already sunk.

Nothing of all this was known positively. It was not even known at this time that he had tried to make advances to John Wesley Larramore. But a few men had figured things out for themselves.

They suspected, therefore, that it was a greater blow to John P. Nash than he cared to admit when in May, before the season was open and when officially the "syndicate"

hotel was still closed, a sudden raid was made upon the place by officers from the sheriff's force, and when certain articles, which in the formal indictment were referred to as "gambling devices, to wit" — specifying them by name — were confiscated, and a half a dozen Finley men of the not very respectable type were arrested. The officers had hoped to find women there, too, but in this they were disappointed. Because of its isolated position, the hotel was an ideal resort for that kind of thing, and Sheriff Seelye and Prosecutor Biggers had long been watching for an opportunity to make a successful raid. It was something of an open secret that the place during the summer season was a resort for gamblers, but at such times the management was watchful. Seelye and Biggers had to wait till the guards had been let down. And it was of little comfort to Nash that these zealous officials of Cascade County engaged in the raid from purely selfish motives. They proclaimed loudly that they were determined to maintain law and order and that they stood for public decency; such defiance of the moral sentiments of the citizenry of Finley and of Cascade County must stop. They, the prosecutor's office and the sheriff's force, were solemnly dedicated to the eradication of such sinister sores on the body politic.

And so on, whole columns of it. Those who were "on to things" smiled somewhat cynically. They knew that there would be a critical primary election in Cascade County the coming August, and Seelye and Biggers needed a selling point with which to sell themselves once more for another term of two years to the voters of the county. In the campaign they had to have a "record" to point to, and

they embraced the opportunity for the raid with exultant joy, sorry only they had not been able to get any "skirts" into their net. It would have been so much more of a smashing sensation.

John P. Nash did not lose his head. In the "Herald" that night he sponsored a dignified statement on behalf of the "syndicate." He made it appear that certain minor officials in charge of the building during the winter months had abused the confidence of the "syndicate." The trial of the case would fully vindicate the integrity and high-mindedness of the "syndicate," and the general public was respectfully asked to suspend judgment until the light of truth could have an opportunity to illumine the as yet obscure corners of this most regrettable incident.

Bunson wrote the statement with gusto, then read it to Nash over the telephone, who pronounced it splendid. And it was in truth splendid, because it was shot through with Bunson's faith in the sacrosanct nature of anything and everything connected with the "syndicate." Every word had a deadly sincerity such as Nash himself could not by any possibility have achieved. Reading it, even the most skeptical and the most cynical were almost forced to believe — such is the unconscious power of sincerity, mistaken though it be.

The raid on the hotel raised the stock of "Reverend" Otley considerably in Finley.

"You've got to hand it to the old geezer, by thunder," men told one another at the Acme lunch-counter; "he's been saying right along there was something shady about the hotel. Otley ain't as crazy as he looks."

"The Lord has brought it about!" some one quoted irreverently, and the familiar words fetched a laugh.

"But Otley got his calculations mixed," another wag contributed; "according to him the place was to become as Sodom and Gomorrah, wolves were to howl in her corridors, and jackals in her pleasant sun-parlors," paraphrasing the familiar passage from Isaiah which "Reverend" Otley often quoted in his beach sermons.

"Her time is near to come; her day shall not be prolonged," a third added to the quotation.

And that jest described quite accurately a curious "hunch" many had about the "syndicate" hotel and about the whole "syndicate" resort project. The raid was only a straw, showing how things were tending. It gave evidence of a kind of down-at-heel atmosphere about the whole scheme so exultantly inaugurated. Those who had "unloaded" plumed themselves on their shrewdness and business foresight.

"I don't know about her time bein' near at hand," Martin Skager replied when "Reverend" Otley pointed out to his good friend that the raid was but a forerunner of the fulfillment of his predictions, "an' I don't know if the Lord'll have anything to do wi' it; but I would n't trust that there sea wall if ever the old lake gets a good swig at her. Like as not, Otley, you'll be able to swagger down Market Street with your hand on the Bible and yell out, 'I told you so!' For if ever that sea wall lets go, the hotel ain't going to have the chance of a snowball in h— in a forest fire!" he amended, out of consideration for his friend's sensibilities.

"God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform," quoted Otley solemnly and somewhat fanatically.

Martin Skager tore off a chew of tobacco with his teeth from a square of plug, watching the while for a look of horrified protest in Otley's eyes. Then with dry provocativeness,

"I guess that there wall of Jericho that you're always spielin' about must ha' been let to the same contractors what built this sea wall!"

"Reverend" Otley, in spite of his fanaticism, had the grace to smile at his friend's little joke.

"That's a gross anachronism, Martin," he said, with a secret twinkle in his eye, knowing that Martin Skager would be stumped by the unfamiliar word.

"No, it ain't," said Martin Skager, undisturbed; "it's only damn poor cement, that's what it is!"

CHAPTER XXVIII

As had often been the case during the year since Dr. Hazzeldeen's visit to Finley, John Wesley Larramore and Dr. Hazzeldeen were again on the subject of Briar. They were sitting in Hazzeldeen's office at the university. Larramore had come to Chicago on purpose to talk it over, although he made an elaborate pretense to Hazzeldeen that mining business had brought him to the city.

Larramore was in doubt. While Hazzeldeen had been at the Farms his faith in Dr. Quentin had been far above par. When he did not see Briar for a while, the naturally skeptical business man often called himself a fool.

"He's got — he's got — magnetism," he was explaining.

"Of course he has — personality also, and temperament."

"But has he got the goods?"

Hazzeldeen smiled. "You business men are born skeptical."

"But you forget that it means more than life to me, Hazzeldeen."

Hazzeldeen was instantly serious. "Of course it does. I was sinking the human in the scientific. That's the way we scientists are made."

"It's funny," — Larramore stroked his bristling gray mustache, — "when Quentin's with me, I'd stake him against the world. He sort of — of hypnotizes me. Not

consciously. He never tries to impress me — that's not Quentin. But it's something oozing out of him — a kind of atmosphere enveloping him. I can't explain it. He's so utterly sure of himself."

"Pretty sure sign in a man of his honesty that he's got the goods."

"But when he's away from me it all looks like a pipe dream."

They returned to the subject they had discussed a good deal during Hazzeldeen's stay at the Farms. Larramore introduced it casually, though he had come to Chicago to talk about it. They went over the old ground for a while.

"It would be as practical as opening a shaft for a new iron mine, Mr. Larramore. There's absolutely nothing fantastic about it."

"But Finley's an isolated little town, provincial, far from the center of things," Larramore objected.

"Has nothing to do with it."

"But where will the patients come from? You could put nearly all of Finley, and Cascade County to boot, into such an institution. Of course, most people are abnormal, but I fear they'd hate to admit it," with a little smile. "There simply are n't people enough there."

Hazzeldeen hitched himself up in his revolving chair, a habit he had when he tried to be impressive.

"I'd undertake to build your institute in the Sahara Desert, seven hundred miles from the nearest Arab's tent, and, given the right people at the head of it — 'real' people, as your Dr. Quentin would say — people who can really use their brains, as I'm convinced Quentin for one

can, and patients would come flocking to it from the four corners of the earth. They'd organize camel caravans to get to it, and some traffic genius would get rich by cornering the transportation privileges!"

"Of course, if you'd have the right man or the right men who could get results. But Quentin —"

Dr. Hazzeldeen interrupted him.

"Has never done anything, you mean, has never proved himself. Absolutely right. On the contrary, has rather failed. Can't tell you, Larramore, how I've come to feel this way about him, but I have faith in him. He's been thinking, and that's extremely rare."

His eyes absently searched the ceiling.

"Thinking," he repeated.

Larramore had also been thinking since the evening, a year ago, when Dr. Hazzeldeen had first thrown out the suggestion in the big living-room of the Farms house. He was much more attracted to the plan than he allowed Hazzeldeen to guess. In his way he loved the dunes, and the Big Swamp, and the broad acres that comprised his Farms. The thought had more than once presented itself to buy a large tract along the lake shore and convert it into a public park. Had Finley been a city like Chicago, or even a fourth its size, he would have done so years ago. But it seemed a little ridiculous to provide a small town with a park of a thousand acres or so.

But the park as a setting for an "institute" (that was the name he and Hazzeldeen gave to the project)! It had been rather fascinating at sight. A park, as it were, for the whole nation. And the hub of it an institution that would

mean hope to thousands, where the best scientists of the land could be gathered together to work on problems like Barry's. It would carry the name of Finley to all parts of the world. There were several small cities in America that were known internationally because of some such institution in them. Larramore had studied the subject; because of Barry he had educated himself the past few years in such things. The wires in strange lands would whisper in alien tongues the name of Finley. He smiled, recalling some such extravagant nonsense a few years ago in the "Herald" about the "syndicate" hotel. But in this case it was within the range of the possible.

He was much nearer falling in with the plan than Dr. Hazzeldeen suspected. But he hung back, the instinct of prudence, developed during a lifetime of practical business, asserting itself.

"You seem to feel surer than I do that Quentin can do something for Barry."

"Of course, I never promised he'd succeed," Hazzeldeen hastened to interpolate.

"I know, I know; neither did he. You scientists are confoundedly slow to promise anything, and here you want me to promise to put in a cool million or so to build an institute because you have faith in Quentin."

Dr. Hazzeldeen took offense. "Well, if you feel that way about it. I'm not a stock promoter who's putting something over. Besides, I distinctly advised to start in a small way — a couple of hundred thousand or so, and build up a staff gradually."

Larramore ignored the offended air of his friend.

"But it would amount to the same thing in the end — begin with a couple of hundred thousand, and then more and more and more. If successful, it could n't be otherwise; if a failure, it would be a couple of hundred thousand thrown away."

"Well, it's nothing to me, only —"

Mr. Larramore laughed. "Don't be so solemn, Hazzeldeen; you'd think I was accusing you of trying to flim-flam me. Tell you what I'll do. If Quentin has the stuff in him you think he has (and I'll admit I'm almost as fanatic on that point as you), I'll go in for it. If he gives my son back to me, you can call it settled."

And as he walked out of Hazzeldeen's office later he thought, "And pray God I may be called upon to make good that promise!"

CHAPTER XXIX

For Briar and Hallie life went on, Briar despising himself as a weakling. He did not have the courage to come out into the open and face the certainty of the death of Hallie's love for him. Carcassonne became intolerable for both and they returned to Finley. It was a time of torture for Briar. He understood how Hallie regarded Barry. Barry was about the same age as she. He was handsome and had a certain magnetic quality. His own magnetism, of an entirely different quality, was so inherent in him that Briar was wholly unconscious of it. And he could not know that there were moments of reaction when Hallie felt a thrill at the slightest touch of his hand. Barry had charm and was full of life, while he, Briar —

He broke off in self-disgust. To a spirited woman like Hallie he could not seem a pleasant person to live with — and a failure and a weakling at that.

About Barry there hung an atmosphere of romance. And he was in every way Hallie's equal but for his misfortune. And he, Briar, was staking his life on removing that!

The comedy of that last won intellectual appreciation from him, even while emotionally it made him wince.

"Good Lord, here I'm preparing him to be her equal — I, the husband, removing the barriers between them — 'Barriers Cut Away!'" — with a half-ironic mental glance at the delicate operation on Barry's brain that he had decided upon.

It was stuff for the mocking gods of laughter. He could

almost hear them, so obsessed was he with the reality of his thoughts. "Some fool writer could work up a smashing climax on that!" He was full of scorn for most writers. "Make the husband high-hearted and noble-minded and all that sort of rot. And he would n't know what he was talking about. In real life people don't make such sacrifices. We're all too selfish — looking out for Number One."

And yet, if he was only a real man —

But he broke off, wondering if his obsession would lead to madness. Suppose at the critical moment something should give way in him — a maniac slicing away with a sharp scalpel at the neatly folded convolutions of a living human brain! Even Dostoyevski had never imagined anything as horribly gruesome as that.

He was afraid, and he put off telling Dr. Hazzeldeen about his great discovery. Always underlying his exultation in his solution of the problem there was a curious sense of impending disaster. He had a feeling of being a character in a Greek tragedy. Not that he definitely thought of himself in that way: Dr. Briar Quentin knew little or nothing about Greek drama or any other kind of drama, and he would not have known how a character in a Greek tragedy was supposed to feel. But there seemed to be something predestined about everything he did with regard to Barry. And he was about to restore to normal life the man who would later rob him of Hallie. He was a fool to do it. But it was written — preordained. And in addition to being a fool, he was a scientist. He was a puppet operated by a force behind the scenes.

Then he caught himself up. "As superstitious as an old

woman who walks three times around a pin on the floor before picking it up. Bosh!" And he forced his mind to become coldly scientific. But before he knew it, his thoughts had wandered again, and he was a character again in a Greek tragedy that goes to its predestined end with the inevitability of a law of nature. . . .

Hallie, too, was in a hopeless mood. For authorship had definitely failed her. As the summer advanced, she had gradually been losing faith in it as a way out, and now she was forced to abandon it.

And she saw now, with her return to her usual honesty, that her interest in Barry was not that of a writer, but that of a woman. To her Barry was not a "case," but a human being. And it made her acutely ashamed sometimes.

Authorship had been thrilling while it lasted. But the fervor of it soon died, and Hallie for the first time understood what a well-known English novelist had meant when he said something to the effect that "it is very pleasant to begin a story, but hell to finish it." Writing, she discovered, is largely drudgery, even creative writing.

And she did not have sufficient incentive to go through with this drudgery. She had no interest in literature for its own sake. There was nothing that drove her to write — no intolerable itch to be at it. After the early exultation had died, she knew that what she had written was futile, dead. And she had common sense enough to know that amateur writers, who have never touched pen or typewriter before, make a success in novels only. She knew the chances were all on the side of failure in the unfamiliar field, or at least that success would not come until after a half-dozen or a dozen years of trying.

And she came to see that success in that way would not solve any problems. For it was not achievement by herself primarily that she wanted, but by Briar. And in the unlikely event of her succeeding as a writer, her very success would only have accentuated his failure. It would have been unendurable for him, she knew, as it would have been for her. And at last she tore up the manuscript of "Double-Edged" — a dozen chapters of it written laboriously in longhand. She tore the pages into narrow strips and then threw them on the wood fire in the kitchen stove. She stood watching the flames flare up.

"The fires of genius!" she mocked herself ironically.

And it would have been futile to try to hide from Briar the sense almost of despair that took hold of her. She knew now there was no door in the stone wall across their path.

But they had their rare moments of a brief return to the old footing, and during one of them Briar, in a sudden flood of expansiveness and with the pathetic hope of winning her back, told Hallie about his discovery in regard to Barry's case. Hallie was unreasonably astonished. So much so that she could not hide her astonishment, although a display of it was not at all complimentary to Briar. And in the hair-trigger frame of mind in which he had been for a long time it stung him.

"What the devil does she think I am, a four-flushing quack?" he thought angrily.

Hallie saw the gleam in his eyes, and she had learned to respect it. "But I did n't understand, Briar, that it was a surgical case," she said with a suggestion of apology in her voice.

"Neither did I" — shortly.

Then, slightly mollified, "At least, not until lately."

Hallie had never taken Briar's study of the Barry case as seriously as Briar felt it deserved. He had been too noncommittal on the subject. And his dismal failure in general practice had infected Hallie with doubts that she had struggled against for a long time. It had not seemed quite reasonable to her that where so-called "authorities" had failed, Briar should succeed.

"It is n't, properly speaking, a surgical case," Briar was continuing. "The surgery part is only a preliminary, and not so very complicated at that. For a long time I've been conscious of something preventing a synthesis of the two personalities. I did n't know what it was. It seemed that the two Barrys must flow into one. There was no psychical reason why they should not. And after a long time I hit on the idea that there was a physical reason. Remove that and nature will do the rest. It's so plain, so plain, Hallie — as simple as, as —"

He could not find a simile. His eyes were aglow, his voice vibrating with enthusiasm.

"And you're sure you can do it, Briar?"

Her voice was extraordinarily low and there was a curious quiver in it. Hallie had suffered a sudden reversal of feeling, from near-skepticism to belief in Briar's ability to cure Barry. His certainty had infected her.

"Absolutely certain!" in a very un-Briarlike, cocksure tone. It was his moment of triumph. He was thinking of himself. He indulged in monologue — very rare with him. He had to talk now. He sat looking straight before him, in his eyes an almost fanatic gleam . . .

He stopped talking, and looking round, he saw Hallie with her hands pressed to her eyes, desperately trying to keep back her tears. There was no reason for them, unless it was a sudden uncontrollable flood of joy. "Why, Hallie!" astonishment ringing in the words. Hallie was not much given to theatrical displays of emotion.

"It's so — wonderful!" came smothered words.

Then she looked up, her eyes shining. "And for Barry!" — elliptically, assuming that Briar would feel the full force of the "and" as she herself meant it. Words were difficult. Her throat would not obey her. The sudden prospect of Achievement after all the years of failure had overwhelmed her. She hid her wet face with her hands again.

Then Briar did what to Hallie seemed a very strange thing. It was wholly inexplicable. He should have come over to where she sat and put his arm about her. She was waiting for that. But he did not come. Instead, he stood poised for a moment in indecision. Then, precipitately, almost in a panic, he picked up his hat and dashed out of the room. Hallie stumbled to the window, half blinded. He was striding rapidly along the walk.

A block away Briar stopped short. There was a wild look in his eyes. He laughed aloud. A newsboy who was approaching him with a copy of the "Herald" looked all about to learn what the strange doctor was laughing at; but seeing nothing, he said, "Aw, shucks!" in an offended tone, and hurried on.

"Can I do it?" Briar repeated the substance of Hallie's question; and then also the substance of his own answer, "I can, absolutely — but I'm damned if I will!"

CHAPTER XXX

He stopped to talk with Martin Skager near the "syndicate" bridge over the gully. Martin Skager was always full of scorn for the concrete monstrosity which the summer population of the hotel called picturesque. Martin Skager knew nothing about æsthetics, but he had been so long and so intimately associated with the lake in its thousand moods — but every mood real, austerely simple and genuine — that he unconsciously measured all things else by it and arrived at a surprisingly just estimate of even æsthetic values. The summer population would have laughed at his notion that the bridge was ugly because it served no purpose and because the cement that went to the making of it had been improperly mixed. But he held fast to his notion, no matter how many vines were trained to trail artistically over the heavy stone railings.

"She's still standin'." He jerked a thick thumb, with black tracings in the creases of the skin, to the bridge.

Briar, in spite of his trouble, forced a laugh. The three words were packed full of Martin Skager's contempt for the bridge.

"Looks plenty solid to me" — with forced provocativeness; Briar hardly knew what he was saying.

Martin Skager rose to the bait.

"She's from the same mixin' machine the sea wall's out of. I watched 'em. The sea wall's also still standin'" — with a faint emphasis on the "still." "Ain't had no big

storms since they put her down, not what you would call storms."

Briar with an effort kept his mind on the subject.

"So you would n't advise me to invest in the resort scheme, Martin?"

Martin Skager cocked his rugged head to one side.

"You listen to our friend Otley: 'The Lord will bring it about!' I don't know much about the Lord, least not as much as he does, but I know when cement is mixed right, and I know what sand can do. But the place ain't romantic enough" — sarcastically — "with one town buried under the sand, so they want to make it two."

They discussed the subject for a while. Martin Skager repeated his theory that the big heap of loose sand that was collecting — hundreds of thousands of tons of it — in direct line with the spot where they were standing would play the devil some day with the gully, the bridge, and all the artificial picturesqueness that the "syndicate" was so painfully developing. It needed only the right kind of storm.

"Nothing can stop a sand heap when it gets it into its head to travel. And look at the darn fool way the hotel is built. Them two hills it stands between will just fold over it some day and tuck it in nice and snug."

After Martin Skager had left him, Briar stood for a long time on the "syndicate" bridge, peering down absently into the gully below. It had become a habit with him to stand on the bridge whenever he wanted to think. He rested his elbows on the solid stone railing and leaned over, his chin in his hands. The nearness of his gully always curiously comforted him.

He no longer played with the thought of suicide: he was afraid of it. But he had lost Hallie, and whether he failed or succeeded in the operation made no difference now. He was through. Done!

He laughed bitterly. He and Hallie, in their young foolishness, had once dreamed they could escape the universal fate of mankind, that their happiness would last. "Pursuit of happiness!" Could there be any three words more sardonically ironic? The Fathers who wrote the Constitution — or was it the Declaration of Independence? — must have smiled bitterly in their wise old sleeves when they penned the words. . . .

Summer had faded almost imperceptibly into autumn, and autumn would soon change into winter. It was nearly November now. The frosts had turned the trees in the dunes into yellows and reds and golds. The "syndicate" hotel had long ago been deserted by its summer population; the windows were boarded up and the place was deserted but for occasional visits of the caretaker.

Seagulls had been returning to the river and lake after their summer visit to Northern waters. During the day they could be seen wheeling about in their search for fish. Briar had often watched them poise for a moment twenty feet, perhaps, above the water, then dart down like a bullet upon the prey that their keen eyes had discovered near the surface, and flying away with a triumphant air, swallowing the food their skill had won for them. They were at least a success, adapted to their environment.

There was one seagull in particular for whose return Briar was always watching. It had lost a leg, and in winter-

time it stood disconsolate on the ice, watching men fish for perch through little square holes. There were flocks of gulls for each fish-hole, standing at a safe distance of some fifty feet or so, waiting to gobble up, with a great flutter of wings and shrill squawks, the undersized perch thrown out to them. But the one-legged gull usually stood alone, and it received ten fish for every one that the other birds got. Everybody pitied his one-legged misfortune. People would shoo off the others to throw their undersized fish to the cripple. And the gull had acquired almost human ingenuity in trading on the sympathies of men. And it was always sleek and fat. The loss of a leg was the most fortunate event in its gull life.

Briar wondered where it was now. Perhaps it had another set of sympathizers in the Northern waters who looked out for it when it was absent from Finley . . .

His mind, suddenly leaving the one-legged gull to its fate, darted back to its old obsession.

He had said in his passion that he would leave Barry to his fate, but he knew now he would not keep that resolve. The scientist in him was too strong.

"Perhaps I'll shoot him down afterwards," he thought, the scene he had witnessed at Carcassonne that summer afternoon flashing across his mind, "but I'll cure him first!"

Then he smiled satirically at the flavor of melodrama in the thought. His face clouded with disgust.

But he would go through with the operation. If his life had to go to irremediable smash, he would show Hallie first that he was not a nonentity. He had powers and he would put them forth.

And then he would go away — like the seagulls. He would be the one-legged gull, maimed, broken. But he would never come back. He was glad now that "It" had died. There would be no complications; no one would be hurt but himself. His going away would be desertion. He decided to look up the law on desertion; he had a vague idea that after a year it would be ground for divorce for Hallie. And then she could marry the "synthetic" Barry, with a mental sneer at the adjective, and forgetting that a moment before he had half determined to shoot down that unfortunate young man after his return to the world of normality. He, Dr. Briar Quentin, would not only restore Barry Larramore, he would force freedom upon Hallie. He was a man and he would play a man's part.

Then he awoke from contemplation of heroics.

"And an ass's part!" And he turned away from the artificial bridge with an ironical smile on his thin, sensitive face. . . .

CHAPTER XXXI

If it had not been for Dr. Hazzeldeen, Briar would not have had an opportunity after all to put his hypothesis about the Barry case to the test. Dr. Hazzeldeen came from Chicago to persuade Barry's father.

"An inspiration," Dr. Hazzeldeen called Briar's discovery, but Briar shook his head. The term somehow smacked of charlatanry. The quack, whether a graduate from a medical school or not, would be just the one to apply it to himself; he would put on an air of mystery and allow it to be assumed that he had occult powers denied other men.

"The result of coldly scientific deduction," he said. "It took me two years to arrive at the conclusion, but the problem, you will admit, was rather complex." And he went on in great detail describing to his friends and fellow-scientist the steps by which he had arrived at the result.

He became almost eloquent, appealing for confirmation of his theory. Not that the master could enlighten him in any way. It was now the other way round, Briar knew. He thought of that fact with no feeling of personal pride. He was not a college student any longer looking up to the master. He was an independent scientist, and this was his particular problem. He had given his mind to it and his heart, and it was a matter of course that he should know more about it than the great Dr. Hazzeldeen could possibly know.

But he would need Hazzeldeen's help in other ways. He

knew the great man's influence with Larramore, and some persuasion would be necessary with the latter.

But even Hazzeldeen had hard sledding with Barry's father when Larramore understood that there must be an operation. Hazzeldeen's stay at the Farms prolonged itself into weeks, and the operation was the one burning subject between the two men.

"But he has n't had enough experience," Larramore objected; "and, after all, to me Barry is not a 'case,' he's a son."

"Of course, Larramore, but would n't you take the chance if it was yourself to be operated on?"

The hard old iron-master smiled.

"Myself! Like a shot! — Like that!" — snapping his fingers — "even if I knew it meant death."

"Well?"

Larramore drew the necessary inference. But he still demurred.

"If you were to do it," he urged for the fiftieth time.

But Dr. Hazzeldeen always instantly vetoed this.

"My eyesight puts it out of the question" — and he unconsciously rubbed his eyes to remove the chronic irritation in them.

"Well, then, Wister, of Johns Hopkins."

"Not if you're wise, Larramore. You forget that Quentin has been thinking about this case night and day for three years. If it was I, I'd take my chances on him in preference to any one. He knows exactly what he's after. He's a fairly good surgeon, and the operation is not as difficult as you imagine."

Hazzeldeen felt slightly guilty, but he hurried on.

"The real work has been done; another man could n't know what has gone before. No, Larramore, Quentin's your man."

"Exactly the way I feel when he's here. He's so almighty cocksure about Barry; sometimes I think he's got me hypnotized when he's here. But when he's away —"

He did not finish the sentence.

"I'm a hard-headed business man," he said instead.

Hazzeldeen smiled. He knew he would win in the end.

And win he did in the end. But unexpectedly, after the date had been set, the seventh of November, Barry Junior objected to the whole business, and all the carefully laid plans came near being upset.

Barry Junior had been secretly hostile for a long time. He resentfully felt that he was being "murdered." No matter what the outcome of the operation, he, Barry Junior, would be "suppressed." If the patient died under the knife, it would, of course, end it for him; if the operation was a success, he, Barry Junior, would pass out, anyway, as a personality. He did not believe that Barry Senior would also pass out. Nor did Barry Senior believe this. To Barry Junior it seemed as clear a case of murder as if his body was to be killed. It was plainly an execution. He hated and feared Dr. Quentin. He secretly believed Hallie had told the young doctor about his, Junior's, "breaks," and that Dr. Quentin had staged the operation for purposes of revenge. A little slip of the knife was all that was needed, and no human law could touch the murderer!

But Barry Senior was as fanatically in favor of the operation as Junior was opposed to it. It was a hard choice for John Wesley Larramore. But Barry Senior won.

"If he dies," the old man told Hazzeldeen — "if he dies —"

There was no need to finish the sentence. Hazzeldeen was a man as well as a scientist, and Larramore was his friend. . . .

In the end Barry Junior was reduced to the desperate expedient of appealing to Hallie. All others had hardened their hearts against him, even his own father. They all sided with Barry Senior. He clenched his hands impotently, his usually cheerful face clouded with trouble.

He had just learned the date of the operation and he was in a panic. The electric doorbell of the Quentin house did not respond to his groping fingers, but Barry Junior did not wait. This was no time for ceremony. It was a case of life and death.

"My God, it may be the last time-time I'll ever see her!" The thought flashed through his mind as he opened the door. He hurried through the familiar rooms. Hallie, as he had half expected, was in the kitchen.

"Why, Barry!"

Her voice at least was kind. She was not against him. The boy took courage.

And his appeal came out in a flood of words. In his agitation the slight catch in his speech became almost a stammer. Under less tragic circumstances it would have been amusing, but Hallie was too full of pity for amusement. Barry Junior was, after all, a personality and he

was fighting with his back against the wall to be allowed to live as Barry Junior. All well and good to try to console him with the hope that he would be much better off and that the Barry Junior part of his personality would survive as an element in the new personality. Confronted with the actual Barry Junior, Hallie understood that there was no comfort in that. How could Barry Junior be expected to believe in this new synthesized Barry as identical with himself? The idea was too subtle to carry conviction.

"They'll mur-murder me!" he cried, his voice high and shrill.

"Don't feel that way about it, Barry," soothingly; "Briar's your friend — your friend, Barry."

The boy hung his head. Even Hallie was turning against him. They were all abandoning him to his fate.

"And you don't care-care, Mrs. Quentin — if they kick me out-out?"

His voice trembled. Hallie did not understand how much her answer would mean to him.

"Of course I care, Barry; we all care."

"Oh, *care!*" he almost shouted, and there was despair in the cry. The tears sprang into Hallie's eyes.

Suddenly Barry Junior lost all control. Hallie was sitting on a kitchen chair. Barry fell on his knees before her and buried his face in her lap. He sobbed almost with the *abandon* of a child.

"Stop them, Mrs. Quentin!" she heard his smothered words. "I want to live. You can do-do it. For God's sake, stop them!"

Hallie stroked his thick fair hair. At that moment she felt like a mother with a grown-up son. Words would be futile.

But Barry's words continued to flow — stammeringly, almost hysterically. And in his desperation he blurted out the horrible suspicion that in calmer moments he would not have dared to voice to Hallie.

Hallie turned white. A little slip of the knife, and no one ever the wiser — no human law to touch the murderer!

But she was instantly ashamed to have allowed even Barry Junior to speak the words. She pushed him from her.

"Briar's a scientist!" she said with a ring of the old pride in her voice. And she said it sternly. Barry Junior was cowed. He got up and stood trembling. He steadied himself, his strong hand gripping the edge of the kitchen table.

The situation was becoming intolerable. Hallie felt rather than saw the hunger in his eyes. She understood intuitively that it was love of her that made Barry Junior cling to his own personality. It seemed the only thing in life worth while to him, hopeless though it was. He did not want to be merged into Barry Senior or into any other Barry who did not love her. What was the good of living, not loving her?

Hallie felt him coming nearer. She could stand no more.

"Barry!" The word rang out. Barry stopped, trembling.

He had an almost comical air of a schoolboy who has been reprimanded. He stood blinking.

And then he turned away crestfallen. Even Hallie had failed him. The rest did n't matter. Let them carve him up now — and the quicker the better. It would be a new way of committing suicide, and at that moment he wanted to die.

He held out his hand.

"Good bye-bye, Mrs. Quentin."

He pronounced the words solemnly, and for once Barry Junior almost achieved impressiveness.

He was making a desperate effort to play the man. Hallie divined that he was playing up to the picture of him that he wanted her to remember; and she also understood that he was doing it unconsciously. It was a little like saying farewell to life. He would never see her again.

She had difficulty holding back her tears. It was extraordinarily like saying good-bye to one who is about to die.

And accompanying the boy's newly learned gesture of manhood she could feel the panic-stricken look of appeal of the real Barry Junior. She quickly turned her eyes away, afraid of her own power and of the pity in her heart.

CHAPTER XXXII

HALLIE was anxious all afternoon. She felt oppressed by a vague dread that she tried, without success, to shake off. Less well-balanced natures than hers would later on have looked back to the feeling as a premonition; after the event they would have said disaster had been foreshadowed. But Hallie did not easily yield to superstition, and she knew, both at the time and later, that her oppression was due to a very natural anxiety as to the outcome of the Barry Larramore operation. The disasters that followed had nothing to do with her present feelings; from the nature of things she could know nothing about them.

The operation was taking place at Larramore Farms. It was the seventh day of November. That date for weeks had seemed to Hallie to stand out on the little calendar in her kitchen as if printed in illuminated ink.

Since early dawn there had been a strong wind from the lake, and now in mid-afternoon it was beginning to assume the proportions of a storm. It made Hallie impatient. A strong wind lashing the branches of the big elm-trees against the house at Larramore Farms would be annoying. And the house, for all of its size, would be shaking. From time to time she felt the vibrations of the walls of her own living-room, and the window casings were giving forth a hollow rattle.

Hallie caught herself once clenching her hands, with a vague idea of a connection between the gesture and a lull in the gale. Then she laughed at herself.

"As if the storm were a personality — as if it cared anything about my little hopes and anxieties!"

That's how Briar would think of it. A hurricane was for all practical purposes an impersonal force, no matter what cosmic personality was back of that force. It would destroy the saint with the same sublime heedlessness that it would the sinner. She could almost hear his slightly ironic words voicing some such sentiment. Dr. Briar Quentin was nothing to the rapidly oncoming gale, and Barry Larramore was nothing, and she, Hallie, was nothing.

There were rumblings of thunder, and Hallie knew from experience what that meant at this time of the year. She had once passed through a storm in the dunes, when she and her parents were still living at Carcassonne, a year or two before her marriage. It had been awe-inspiring. The vivid memory of it came back now. At any other time she might have enjoyed the gale. It was rather pleasurable to be comfortable and warm at home — safe against danger — and then to hear the far-off travail of the lake. But now the wind only increased her dread.

The gale was sharply northwest. Hallie knew what the dunes would be like. Millions of tons of sand would be shifting places. To-morrow morning's sun would reveal some tree-trunks, buried for years, half denuded of their covering of sand, while in other places green growing shrubs would be covered, the life choked out of them. She wondered if the road to Carcassonne would be blocked with drift sand, like a railroad track blocked by snow. And Carcassonne itself — next time she went there she would have to clear the fine silt sand out of the closets

and cupboards. It would have penetrated into every nook.

Would the cupola of the Monarch be blown off? Briar had often predicted that the hill would some day lose its crown. She hoped not. It would not seem like the same friendly place.

Darkness came with a suddenness that startled Hallie. She stepped over to the clock and peered at it in the gathering gloom. It was not yet four o'clock in the afternoon. Returning to the window, she scanned the patch of sky that was visible among the furiously whipping branches of the trees. It had the blackness of ink.

She wondered if the operation had advanced far. It would probably take several hours, and things like that never began at the time set for them. The early darkness would interfere with it, perhaps. She felt oppressed.

She did not turn on the lights, but sat at the window peering out into the darkness. The street lights were turned on earlier than usual. They swayed crazily in the gale and gave the momentary effect from time to time of going out. But each time they seemed to recover themselves, and flickered and sputtered back into life.

The whole house was quivering. At any other time she would have liked to bundle herself up in her long heavy coat and go with Briar to the beach to watch the waves wash over the breakwater all the way from the shore to the lighthouse at the end of the pier. The steel elevated walk, with its handrail of gas-pipe, was some twenty feet high, but to-night it would be impossible to walk its length without getting wet. Ordinarily it would have been fascinating

to watch the impact of the waves against the piers made impregnable by hundreds of thousands of tons of stone between wooden ramparts held together by steel rods an inch thick. But to-night the storm was only a disgusting nuisance bereft of all its grandeur . . .

The harsh jangle of the telephone bell in the darkness startled her. Hallie trembled as she took down the receiver.

It was Miss Steady.

"Jack!" Hallie caught, and then the noise of the storm outside obscured some words. Miss Steady was obviously laboring under great excitement.

"What's that? What's that?" Hallie heard herself speaking sharply in the darkness.

"Yes, on the lake," Miss Steady's agitated voice confirmed . . . "With Martin Skager . . . the fishing tug . . ."

And the wire became dead. The receiver had evidently been violently clamped upon the hook.

At the same moment the whistle of the Riverview Furniture Factory began to blow. All Finley knew what that meant. Its low, dull call was the signal of distress. It had come to be an institution in Finley. The Riverview engine-room was but a few rods distant from the Coast Guard station, and when the life-saving crew was called out on a night of storm, the fireman pulled the whistle cord, tying it to a nail in the wall so that it kept on blowing — a signal to all Finley that there was excitement afoot.

In an incredibly short time Miss Steady's runabout was at the curb.

"Oh, no, no!" Miss Steady cried in answer to Hallie's solicitous urging to come into the house. "We can't now!" Her voice was half drowned, but Hallie understood her gesture. Rose said nothing, but she sat tense, gripping the wheel.

Hallie hurried back into the house for her heavy coat. She climbed into the car and sat on Miss Steady's lap. Rose turned the runabout in the direction of the lake.

The beach was crowded when they arrived — men and women and children, muffled up to the ears in greatcoats and holding their hands to their faces to protect cheeks and eyes from the inescapable sting of the beach sand. They were arriving from all the streets that led to the water, people with excited faces. They asked one another what was up. What vessel was signaling? Who was drowned? Had the life-savers gone out? Would they use the Lyle gun or would they go in the surfboat?

There was nothing to be seen. Before them the menacing blackness of the lake. With eyes narrowed to slits the three women peered into the darkness. Everybody else was doing the same thing or else asking wild questions. Everybody was excited. Many did not know what it was all about, but they were being given a free spectacle. They were ready to gloat over any dramatic incident that might offer itself.

To Hallie it was all a phantasmagoria of horror. She knew the power of the lake. Fear of it in time of storm was bred in the bone of her, as was love of it in time of calm. She and Rose and Miss Steady clung together. They dared ask no questions, fearful of what the answers might

be. Somewhere along the beach the life-savers were at work with the surfboat, but in the confusion the women could not get to the spot. They could see little except a welter of excited people. . . .

It was only a matter of a little over half an hour, according to the "Herald" next day, from the time the first signal of distress was given to the time the surfboat came back safely with Martin Skager and Jack and the four men who composed the crew of the wrecked fishing tug Marie. People shook hands excitedly with the men. They were heroes for the moment. They had staged a spectacle. They had furnished excitement. To the three women it had seemed hours that the rescue had been in progress. But they laughed hysterically now.

Martin Skager and Jack stood before them.

"We beat her to it again," said Martin Skager, pointing with his thumb over his shoulder to the lake. On his rugged old face was his look of ineradicable humor. "But I reckon some day the old girl will get me!"

Miss Steady wanted to take Jack into her arms, but the boy shamefacedly eluded her. He had been thoroughly frightened, but he was trying hard to attain the matter-of-fact air of Martin Skager.

"Little stiff, was n't it, Jack?" the fisherman laughed.

"Come to think of it, there was a little breeze," Jack imitated him, but his voice trembled.

"Oh, Jack, how can you?" Miss Steady cried. Somehow it seemed almost blasphemous to her to jest about the death they had just escaped by a hair.

The man and boy sobered, awed by the nurse's distress.

Hallie and Rose tried to laugh, to ease the tension, but they were not very successful.

"Thought for a minute I was a goner," Martin Skager remarked.

He peered in the general direction of the "syndicate" hotel in the pocket of hills across the river.

"She'll get an awful wallop to-night, that there sea wall will. Would n't s'prise me if Otley had the right dope after all."

He answered several questions of Miss Steady and Hallie, and a little later he said again, as if reflectively, "An awful wallop!" and he shook his wise old head.

CHAPTER XXXIII

JOHN WESLEY LARRAMORE had converted a room at the top of the house at Larramore Farms into a hospital operating-room. The work had been done under the personal direction of Dr. Hazzeldeen and it was complete in every respect. Nothing like it had been known in Finley, or even in Sisson. Whenever he could put the operation itself out of his mind for a moment, Larramore viewed the room with pride. There was nothing in the best-equipped operating-room in America that was not to be found here. The completeness of it all was reassuring. It had much to do with keeping him keyed up in the determination to go through with the venture.

But he weakened when the hour struck.

"Looks ugly outside," he suggested tentatively.

Dr. Hazzeldeen looked at Briar. Briar's voice was matter-of-fact.

"That's to be expected in November; would n't surprise me to see the lake break loose before night."

"And that won't distract your attention?"

Briar understood the question as a prelude to a suggestion to postpone the operation. "Well, if it should shake the house down about my ears I might perhaps notice it!" The humor was forced, but it had its effect.

"I thought —" began Larramore; but Dr. Hazzeldeen interrupted him.

"You don't know a born surgeon, Mr. Larramore. I've

seen operations at sea, with the ship rising and falling like a drunken man, and the surgeon never knowing he was n't on dry land."

Mr. Larramore was ashamed to go on with his suggestion. Dr. Hazzeldeen looked at Briar significantly.

Barry Senior came in, his scalp shaved as smoothly as his face. He came direct from the hands of the barber in the adjoining room.

"Look at your son, dad — a he-Venus!" he said with as much gayety as Barry Senior was ever capable of. He passed his hand over his denuded head and smiled. Stepping across the room he made as if to view himself in the mirror. But he stopped abruptly. "No, I guess I won't!"

The three men smiled in spite of the feeling of constraint under which they were laboring. Barry Senior without hair was a ludicrous travesty of himself.

The elm-trees outside were lashing the slate roof of the house. Briar's glance wandered across the Big Swamp to the dunes of Carcassonne. And curiously the night came back to him when as a boy he slept in Martin Skager's cottage with the rain and sand pelting on the tin roof and the ink of the darkness enclosing the little house like a cloud. He remembered how he had pulled the covers over his head and had drawn his knees up to his chin, making a warm nest for himself, like a dog curled up in a bed of straw. And that little boy was he, Briar Quentin. It seemed almost comical. But he had a sudden overmastering desire to be that little boy again, safe and warm in Martin Skager's bed.

He awoke to his surroundings almost immediately. The

excursion back into his childhood had consumed about a second of actual time. He deliberately turned away from the window. And it was almost like a farewell to Carcassonne and to all that part of his life. He would sternly shut it out. The operation was now before him.

They mounted the stairs in silence. Mr. Larramore's usually firm lips were moving silently. Dr. Hazzeldeen guessed that the hard old man was praying, and he wondered curiously if it was something as irrelevant as "Now I lay me down to sleep." In his long experience he had heard some curious things from the lips of those about to pass through an ordeal. And then, without warning, at the very door of the operating-room, there was crisis.

Dr. Hazzeldeen, who was leading the way, opened the door. Barry looked in upon the scene — the hooded light over the operating-table, the device for administering the anæsthetic, the table with its rows of shining instruments, the three trained nurses in spotless uniform standing ready and expectant. A look of horror came into his eyes. Briar, who was standing by his side, realized immediately that Barry Junior had "emerged." Boy and man stood facing each other, and Briar read hatred in Barry Junior's eyes. It was quite undisguised now. And the doctor was conscious of a curious feeling of contempt. For the fraction of a second Briar's fingers twitched with the instinctive desire of the uncontrolled savage to sink into the throat of the enemy. But the feeling was instantly inhibited.

The two stood facing each other. They held the pose only for a moment. Then Barry turned to his father. He grasped the old man's shoulders.

"It'll soon be over, my boy," Larramore tried to encourage him.

"Yes, it'll soon-soon be over!"

Barry Junior was beaten. He felt powerless. The whole world was against him. Once more he had an impulse to play the man. He turned and faced the operating-room.

"I'm ready-ready."

And then there was a sudden recoil. He grasped blindly at his father. The old man put his arms about his son.

It was a critical moment, and Dr. Hazzeldeen turned with a gesture of panic.

But Briar was speaking calmly, almost coldly, a ring of authority in every word: "Leave your father alone, Barry; raise your head; now look at me."

Barry Junior's eyes were drawn to the young doctor's reluctantly. Briar held them a moment. Then he signaled to one of the three nurses.

"You may take Mr. Larramore downstairs, Miss Allison," he said; and Miss Allison understood from the tone that she was to keep him there.

Barry turned to his father. "Well, dad, wish me luck."

Mr. Larramore was bewildered. It was Barry Senior. The young man smiled. He held out his hand. John Wesley Larramore, iron-master, grasped it convulsively. Then he turned away without a word and allowed Miss Allison to pilot him down the wide stairway.

The sudden crisis had come and gone so quickly that Barry had hardly been conscious of it. He had a feeling of having been curiously confused for a moment; but that was natural at such a time.

He watched with interest while Briar washed his hands and arms, covering them with thick lather and scrubbing them vigorously with a brush. Dr. Hazzeldeen drew a line across the floor with chalk beyond which no one was to be allowed to step if any one should enter the room during the progress of the operation. The nurses were alert. They tied on Briar's operating-gown so he would not be compelled to touch anything with his hands after sterilization. Barry Senior smiled. It seemed like a good deal of fuss. Then he climbed on the operating-table . . .

Downstairs John Wesley Larramore stood for a long time at the window overlooking the Big Swamp. The northwest gale was sweeping across the wide, open space. It was tearing up grass tufts from the familiar hummocks and whirling them into space. Near the house the elm-trees were creaking and groaning, and now and again a twig snapped.

"By and by it will be whole branches or whole trees," he thought, his mind full of forebodings. The lake by this time would be in a turmoil. He imagined he heard the distant roar of it.

Miss Allison sat watching him, alert and competent. It was getting dark in mid-afternoon.

"This'll make it hard for him to see," said the old man to no one in particular.

"Won't make a particle of difference" — Miss Allison spoke in her confident way; "a surgeon does n't depend on daylight."

But Mr. Larramore did not seem to hear her.

Mrs. Hudson, the housekeeper, came into the room.

"You'll stay a little, Mrs. Hudson?" the old man asked as if expecting her to refuse.

"Of course, Mr. Larramore." The woman had served him for years. He felt better when some one was with him who was familiar. Mrs. Hudson divined this, and seeing George, the colored Larramore Farms chauffeur, passing the window, she signaled to him to come in. She explained the situation to him in a semi-whisper.

"Sho' thing, Mistah Larr'mo'," said George cheerfully, as if in answer to a request from the master.

"Thank you, George," the old man acknowledged the chauffeur's presence.

John Wesley Larramore gave the unmistakable impression of age this afternoon. Mrs. Hudson and George had never thought of him before as old; he was too healthy and too vital for that. But now his face was drawn and it appeared gray in the uncertain light. He was facing a situation that he could not control and he felt helpless.

It became so dark in the room that the persons in it could no longer distinguish one another's faces, although it was but a little past middle afternoon. Large black clouds were drifting across the sky, and the windows in the carefully weather-stripped Farms house were rattling, yielding to the pressure of the erratic gusts of wind. From time to time big blobs of rain pelted against the glass for a few moments, only to cease suddenly. A brick came down from a defective chimney and clattered along the roof. Only the elasticity of the giant elm-trees about the house saved their branches, which, however, whipped the sides and roof of the building.

The unnatural darkness deceived Larramore.

"It must be about over," he suggested with a timidity unnatural to him.

Miss Allison peered at her watch.

"Half-past three. Oh, no, Mr. Larramore, it can hardly have begun."

"Only half-past three!" in astonishment; and he went to the window to look at his own watch in confirmation.

Miss Allison kept her eyes on him.

"I'll go up and see," she said, modulating her tone determinedly on a note of the commonplace.

Upstairs she opened the door of the operating-room without hesitancy and with no suggestion of stealth in her manner. She walked in quietly, but boldly. As she had expected, no one paid any attention to her entrance. Under the glare of the large hooded light at the other end of the room Dr. Quentin stood bending over the operating-table, only one side of his face visible to Miss Allison. Of the patient the nurse could see only the feet. Dr. Hazzeldeen stood watching, speaking a word occasionally. The two nurses were busy sterilizing instruments. Miss Allison, for the time being, was an outsider and she observed the chalk-line regulation.

Once, for a moment, apparently to rest his eyes, Dr. Quentin looked up and faced Miss Allison squarely. But the nurse knew that he did not see her. In the halo of sharp light about him all the rest of the room was a blur of confused darkness, she knew. He was pale, the whiteness of his skin contrasting sharply with the blackness of his hair. There was something a trifle ghastly in his look, but

the unemotional Miss Allison attached no significance to this.

But she was glad Mrs. Hudson and George were downstairs. This was no time for an emotional fuss, and it was her business to prevent it. If necessary the three of them would keep Mr. Larramore out of the operating-room by physical force. Miss Allison was a determined person and a resourceful one.

"Going fine," she answered the eager look of the ironmaster when she reëntered the living-room. She smiled in the darkness: she knew absolutely nothing about how it was going. Barry might at this moment be at the edge of death. Even the best surgeons made mistakes occasionally, and an operation on the brain —

"If 't was me," she thought, "I'd want him to make the mistake final after he'd made it!" And she gave her practical mind for a few moments to the ethics of such a procedure.

"And it will soon be over?" Mr. Larramore said hesitatingly.

"Oh, no," firmly, "not for a good while."

Mr. Larramore sighed.

"Will you turn on the lights, Mrs. Hudson," Miss Allison continued.

Mr. Larramore spoke quickly, "Oh, no, no, Miss — Miss —" He had forgotten the nurse's name; "please, no, Mrs. Hudson," he ended with a note of appeal.

"Much better, Mr. Larramore," the nurse answered firmly. She knew the effect of darkness on the imagination, and it was her job to keep Barry's father quiet. She

motioned to Mrs. Hudson, and the housekeeper, to whom Larramore's word had long been law, surprisingly obeyed Miss Allison without hesitation. Mr. Larramore was but a child in their hands.

Outside the storm was gathering force. At any other time there would have been enjoyment in it for Mr. Larramore. He respected power, and there was always to his mind something epic in the unrestrained power of a November storm that in large measure compensated for the destruction it caused. Its very unrestraint gave it a fascination that no display of man-guided force possessed for him.

But to-day he hardly noticed the storm, or when he did, it was with a vague feeling of irritation. It was a confounded nuisance, and he impotently wished for the power to stop it. But his helplessness in this was of a piece with his general impotence. He was nothing — a child, powerless. Upstairs they were cutting into the brain tissue of his son, and he could not stop them. Suppose Dr. Quentin's hand trembled and one of the shining sharp instruments he had seen lying in their case went a thousandth of an inch too far!

He turned white and his hands trembled. But he forced himself to sit still, conscious of the quiet eyes of Miss Allison upon him. He was unnerved, and for the first time in his life he felt cowed.

. . . The hours passed. Then at last Dr. Quentin stood before him, his face haggard and drawn. John Wesley Larramore did not dare speak the eager question that trembled on his lips . . .

CHAPTER XXXIV

The big Larramore car was at the door at last, and Briar was getting out of it. Hallie's impulse was to run out bareheaded into the storm. She was all impatience. It was an hour or more since Miss Steady and Rose and Jack had driven away. To Hallie it had seemed a century. But the presence of the Larramore chauffeur restrained her. Also Briar would be exhausted. Through the little squares of glass in the front door of the darkened hall she could see him stepping down from the front seat beside the driver, his little black instrument case in his hand. In the swaying light of the street lamps his face looked haggard. It would never do to pelt him with importunate questions. And more than likely there was nothing to tell. He probably was feeling a violent reaction after the tense strain of the afternoon. He would not only be exhausted, but filled with a vast hopelessness. He would not want to talk. She would have to wait until he recovered his mental equilibrium.

She felt very tender, as if he were ill and needed nursing. This feeling had been strong upon her for some time, and it was accentuated by the ghostlike vigil she had been keeping all afternoon. She was acutely conscious of the shadow between them. She could not get to Briar, and probably he felt the same inability to get to her. They did not understand each other; there was no longer anything left of that perfect candor between them that had once

been the best of their life together. Perhaps she was to blame.

She had turned out the lights so that she could open the door to him in the darkened hall. She would help him off with his heavy overcoat, take his instrument case out of his hand, and then put her arms about him in the darkness. She would lead him to a chair in the comfortable living-room, and together they would sit listening to the storm — at rest, safe. And they would not say a word for a long time.

Briar was halfway to the house, and the Larramore car was pulling away from the curb. Hallie's hand was on the knob, ready to open the door to admit Briar and a swirl of wind.

Another car dashed up, two men on the front seat. One of them shouted something to Briar that brought him to a sudden halt on the walk. The car stopped and one of the men jumped out. Hallie opened the door.

"The sea wall!" she heard, and "John P. Nash!"

Briar wheeled about. Hallie called after him, but the clatter of the wind drowned her voice. She wanted to tell him she was there. The house being dark, he evidently thought she was not at home. He almost ran to the car, jerked the back door open and jumped in. The driver threw in the clutch, and before Hallie could step out on the porch the machine was dashing down the street. The whole episode had taken a matter of seconds. . . .

John P. Nash had been at the "syndicate" hotel since mid-afternoon. At three o'clock the caretaker telephoned him. Later Nash himself telephoned from the hotel to

Finley for more men. It became known in the city that the hotel was in danger. Some one tried to jest about it by quoting the now threadbare pronouncement of "Reverend" Otley, "The Lord will bring it about," but his auditors refused to give any countenance to wit on this subject now that there was actual danger, as there seemed to be.

It was well understood that by this time the "syndicate" project had practically narrowed down to one man, and that man John P. Nash. The outsiders had jockeyed and reorganized until most of them had "got from under," as the more conservative business men of Finley had done early in the history of the hotel. But it was understood now in Finley that on the "syndicate" men's part it had practically amounted to a plot. They had intended from the beginning to "get out from under." But their schemes had been much more ambitious than the developments showed. Comparatively speaking, they had failed because so many had taken fright early in the game, partly because of Otley's jeremiads, partly because of Finley's native conservatism. But Nash had been in too deep to pull out. It was sink or swim with him, and he had elected to swim. He had never yet failed to reach shore and he would this time.

But ever since the raid on the hotel the preceding winter Nash had been anxious. He had the mammoth hotel on his hands, and in it was tied up everything he had in the world, even his home, which had been double mortgaged. The court case resulting from the raid was still hanging fire in the Cascade County Circuit Court, Nash having

secured a continuance twice. The summer's business had been good, but he would have to have two or three more summers like it before he could get rid of his white elephant and come out clear. The hotel would need a reputation as a money-maker. And the raid was not doing it any good . . .

"Don't like the looks of things," the caretaker telephoned.

"Don't like the looks of what?" Nash asked him to particularize.

"Well," hesitatingly, "the sea wall."

The famous sea wall was built of concrete palisades that were dovetailed together like boards in a piece of flooring. Along one edge of each "slab," from top to bottom, was a deep groove, and along the other edge was a corresponding ridge; and the ridge of one palisade fitted in the groove of the one next it with tight snugness. Bunson at one time printed much in the "Herald" about the theory of this construction. It would break the vibrations caused by the constant pounding of the waves, and it was therefore a hundred times as strong as a solid wall of concrete. It was in fact practically indestructible. Each palisade had a rod of twisted steel running through it from bottom to top, and making a loop there, down to the bottom again, forming a huge steel hairpin embedded firmly in solid concrete. The loop at the top was the handle by which the large machine that looked and worked like a pile-driver had grasped each palisade to swing it into place and sink it deep into the sand of the bottom of the lake. During the quiet days while the work was in progress any one might

have been pardoned for entertaining the conviction that no force of nature short of the convulsions of an earthquake could dislodge the long slabs of cement from their firm bed.

When Nash arrived on the scene no danger to the sea wall was apparent, and the lawyer felt disposed to blame his caretaker for being an alarmist. The man was apologetic. It seemed that he had called up Nash because of a hunch rather than because of any tangible reason that could be put into words. He simply did n't like the looks of things and that was about all he could say.

There was in fact no opportunity to learn anything more. The sea wall could not be examined. The waves were dashing against it with a terrific impact. The spray washed over it and no one could have stood on the wall without being washed off. The water was also dashing up against the securely boarded windows of that part of the hotel that was built over the lake. It seeped through the boards and through the windows into the rooms. Nash telephoned for men to help keep it mopped up.

Some time later in the afternoon — it must have been between five and six, although for all Nash and his helpers knew it might have been midnight; they had lost all sense of time; they felt themselves struggling against an implacable force that would keep on forever and forever — some time late in the afternoon water began to appear in the large ballroom.

"Now where the hell did that come from?" the man cried who discovered it. The ballroom was not over the water. That part of the building rested on foundations

embedded in the sand of the beach between the two sand hills. The section of the hotel over the water stood on piles — piles sunk twenty feet into the ground.

The water came seeping through the floor. There was an uncanny suggestion of the supernatural about it. By all the laws of experience there could not be any water in the ballroom. The men mopped it up with furious vigor, but they might almost as well have tried to mop up the floor of the lake itself. It oozed out between the tightly joined boards in the very trail of their mops, as if in sardonic defiance of their efforts.

Curiously, it was some time before any one thought of the sea wall. They were ready to believe in a miracle. They were prepared to ascribe the oozing of the water through the ballroom floor to what legal documents would describe as "an act of God." The water could n't come through the ballroom floor; it was humanly impossible. But it *was* coming through, by thunder, and there you were. A man's eyes count for something, and it was not reasonable to suppose that all seven of them had gone bug-house at the same time. Their feet were wet from standing in water that could n't be there!

The caretaker thought of the sea wall first. He struggled against it for a moment, fearing the ridicule of the others, and remembering the sting of Nash's scorn earlier in the afternoon. But he ventured the suggestion, and all seven of them hurried out of the building so precipitately that their exit had the appearance of panic.

Out of doors there was little to be seen because of the darkness. But the sea wall was obviously crumbling.

Nothing else could explain the tremendous force with which the water — thousands of tons of it — was dashing up against the building.

They stood there, silenced by the sheer wonder of it. The mighty sea wall giving way! It was easier to believe in a miracle. The caretaker was secretly exultant. He had been right all along, by thunder! What did Nash have to say for himself now? He, the caretaker, was n't as much of a fool as Nash had intimated in the afternoon. Perhaps after this the lawyer would have a little more respect for his caretaker's hunches. He was a practical man. It was easy enough to laugh at him when he expressed a practical opinion, but it was practical knowledge that counted, and he had warned Nash in the afternoon.

Not that the warning would have done any good even if Nash had heeded it. What could have been done? They could n't very well have set slanting boards against the concrete wall as props. But the caretaker did not get that far in his contemplation of the matter. His judgment had been right. That the wall was actually coming down was a feather in his cap. Nash could never laugh at him again!

But no word was spoken. In the uproar conversation was difficult. The men stood there helpless, protecting their faces with their hands against the sting of the sand. All the lights in the ballroom were burning brightly, as if for a dance of women in gay-colored gowns and men and boys in immaculate linen and evening clothes.

. . . The collapse of the mammoth building came an hour later with the suddenness almost of a thunderclap.

One moment the lights were glowing, the next moment all was dark, the huge, sharply sloping roof was sagging.

It was hard to see how the damage was being done or how extensive it was, but there would be an almost complete collapse in the end. That seemed certain.

"An' a while ago we were in it!" said one of the men in an injured tone, as if he was trying to intimate that Nash had known all about the danger and had placed their lives in jeopardy for his miserable property.

"Is it insured?" some one asked.

"Against fire, not against wind or waves," — the caretaker bawled in reply. Nash was not there to hear. He had rushed to the other side of the building where the roof began to cave in first.

Later there was some kind of official investigation, and it was established that the architecture of the hotel had been defective. The "Herald" printed a lengthy report on the subject. The building could not have collapsed the way it did and as suddenly as it did if it had been built right in the first place, Bunson averred.

It was the middle of the building that gave way first, sagging down as some support gave way. The two ends then seemed to fold in upon the middle. Two or three of the piles on which the section over the water was resting were drawn out of the sand as that part of the hotel tumbled over into the general mass of the ruins.

After that there was nothing left to be surprised at. And the men accepted it as in character with the rest of the uproar and ruin and the sense of universal collapse when they heard the sharp crack of a pistol shot. Nor

were they unduly surprised, on rushing to the other side of the mass of débris, to come upon Nash lying bloody on the sand. They claimed vehemently later that they had had a feeling that it was coming — a hunch, youbetya! You could n't tell them anything about it; they knew what they were talking about.

He was still alive and they carried him to the cottage of Martin Skager which was nearest, while two of the men jumped into the car in which Nash had come to the hotel earlier in the afternoon, and raced like mad to Finley to find a doctor. Dr. Quentin being the man's brother-in-law, they made him their immediate objective . . .

"He's dead," said Dr. Quentin coldly, after a single touch of Nash's breast with a hand that felt for the beat of the heart.

The others stood about in awed silence. They saw it was a mistake to have called in a near relative, but in the excitement of the moment such things can't be thought of. Dr. Quentin's face was haggard and drawn. There was a wild look in his eyes.

He picked up his little black instrument case and passed out through the door into the darkness. They paid no heed, engaged as they were in straightening the body.

CHAPTER XXXV

When Briar stepped out of the warmth of the Martin Skager cottage into the bluster of the night he had no objective. He merely wanted to get away from people. He had an instinct for solitude, and the wildness of the night fitted in with his mood. He was not unstrung because of the tragedy that had revealed itself in the house. The death of John P. Nash had hardly touched him. Later, he knew, he would be horribly sorry for Mildred and the boys, but just now there was no room in his consciousness for any emotional reaction to the sorrows of another. He was physically exhausted and spiritually he was in a panic. He knew he should have taken command at the cottage. He was, after all, the dead man's brother-in-law; he should have seen to the arrangements for breaking the tragic news to Mildred. The others were nothing to Nash; he probably had not known the names of all of them.

It was perhaps an obscure consciousness of the fact, that if he stayed he would be expected to act as befits a near relative of the suicide, that made him slip away. That he was not capable of now. Not because of dislike for Nash — he had liked the man well enough so far as it went; he simply could not act up to anything to-night. He was down to the bedrock of his emotions; all his reserves had been used up.

He drew his hat down over his eyes to protect them against the sting of the sand and turned his face to the hills, going into the teeth of the sand storm.

It was over. The operation would be a success. His sure judgment told him there could hardly be a doubt. It was really not as complicated a piece of work as people supposed; and, anyway, the operation was merely a side issue — necessary, as it is necessary to clear away the débris of a wrecked building before it is possible to build a new one.

Looking up, he saw that the figure had probably been suggested by his surroundings. For the ruins of the "syndicate" hotel lay directly in his path. Even in the darkness it was plain that the wreck was complete and irremediable.

"That ruin will never be cleared away," he said aloud. Vocalization of his thoughts seemed necessary in the uproar about him. The sand would already be settling down on the ruins. And the slow accretions of the years would gradually hide them from sight. A generation hence there would perhaps be only a chimney sticking out of a sand heap to mark the spot.

"They're walking over it — the dunes are on the march!"

He caught himself exulting in the impersonal power of the hills, he who a moment before had felt that all emotion was dead. Men in their pride had built a sea wall. He laughed. A sea wall against the onward sweep of the lake! And the dunes! Men had not reckoned with the elemental force in a grain of sand. It looked so innocent and harmless. One picked up thousands of them in a single handful and allowed them to trickle through the fingers to the ground — absently, heedlessly. And the sand

offered no resistance. The grains settled snugly against one another and lay inert, to be stepped on by man or beast, or to be tossed up into the air by the toy spade of a child. The sand was older than man's most ancient ancestors. It had been there, or somewhere, ten million years ago, and it would be there, or somewhere, ten million years hence. And what a history! It had perhaps been spewed up as metal-like rock by a volcanic outburst from the bowels of the earth. It had been ground and powdered by a million years of glacier action. The rivers of ice covering a continent had rolled it along, grinding it finer and finer. It had wandered as sediment in strange, muddy streams, carried along in the swift current. It had been swept far out into lakes long since extinct whose outlines no human eye had ever seen. It had been tossed about and buffeted, and at last it had been piled up here, clean with a million years of washing, pigmented with a thousand combinations of color, hard, impersonal, "real"!

Men deluded themselves with the thought that they were its masters. But the sand paid no heed to their boastings. It bided its time, and then it impersonally overwhelmed everything in its path. It crept down upon its prey grain by grain in the slow years. It could afford to take its time. A thousand years were but as a second in the span of its life. If it did not overwhelm a victim to-day it would a century hence. The wind was its friend, and the storms. The raindrop trickling down the hillside carried it on its back. Or it lay inert for a quarter of a century and then traveled half a league in a single night's storm wrack. It buried Jacob Finley's sawmill village from sight,

twenty, forty, sixty feet deep. It crushed out the life of an oak two centuries old. It was mighty! It was splendid!

Briar held up his face to feel the sting of it.

His mind came back from its excursion into geology; it reverted to the operation of the afternoon. He should be exultant. The débris in Barry's brain had been cleared away; nature would erect the building. And *his* mind had conceived it. He had dared to take the leap of the imagination that had been necessary before the knife could be brought into play. It had been his job — his!

But there was no exultation. It was over, and there was no turning back.

He walked out upon the "syndicate" bridge that spanned the gully. The wind was sweeping a swirl of sand from the hills.

"Martin Skager's theory coming true," he thought. The gale for the first time in years was blowing at an extremely sharp angle with reference to the shore. That was what had broken down the sea wall. Before morning it would have picked up the heap of sand that had been collecting for a dozen years, millions of tons of it, and deposit it in the crevices and hollows. It would choke the gully.

The bridge felt uneven to his feet. At first he paid no heed. He stood looking out into the blackness. Merely a trick of the imagination that the floor of the bridge was not level, but sloped to one corner. The slope was in his mind. All the world was upside down.

But he became convinced at last that there was a slope. The words of Martin Skager recurred to his mind:

"Out of the same cement mixer what they got the sea wall out of!"

The abutment at one end was crumbling. The storm had found it and had sucked out the supporting sand. The sand again! He almost laughed. The sand was having its little joke at man's expense. The cackle of its sardonic laugh could almost be heard in the uproar of the storm.

Suppose the bridge gave way. He smiled in the darkness. That kind of thing happened only in melodrama. He stamped his foot, as one does to test the strength of ice on a river. The concrete, for all its slope to one corner, was sound as a dollar. And even if it should crash down to the bottom fifteen feet below, what of it? There was a certain fascination in the thought.

But forewarned though he was, he was to learn that the gully bridge, that artistic monstrosity, product of an artificial mind, still had its little surprise for him. He had an impulse to lean over the heavy concrete railing, as his habit was, and look down into the gloomy depths of the gully. With his elbows on the railing and his chin sunk in his hands, he could stand at ease and let the storm sweep over his bent back.

There was a crash. He felt his foot caught in a vine as he fell headlong. Then darkness.

But only for a moment, or so at least it seemed to him. He lay on a bed of sand that had been forming in the bottom of the gully. On his legs lay a heavy, ragged block of broken concrete, the railing of the bridge with which he had come crashing down. The funny part of it was that there was absolutely no sensation in his legs. And yet,

humanly speaking, it must hurt to have a raw-edged chunk of concrete cutting into the flesh and bone.

"No steel rods through the railing," he explained the mishap; "the bridge was a fake — not 'real' — and when the abutment crumbled, the railing broke loose. And like a fool I went and leaned my weight on it." He wondered what had become of his instrument case.

The truth flashed on him.

"Paralyzed!"

And more than likely both legs broken. He could not investigate, the block of concrete was in the way. He wondered how it could be half buried in the sand. It was but a moment since he had come crashing from the bridge above.

And then, feeling around with his hands, he discovered that his body was also partly buried in the sand. For a moment it struck him as a little droll. He was sitting up now, in a slightly sidewise posture, but back of him he could feel the mould where his head and body had lain.

"Must have come down with an awful smash to make such a dent in the sand!"

Again a flash of the truth. He had been unconscious much longer than he had supposed.

"Good Lord, if I had n't come to, I might have been buried alive!"

He had not yet, in sober truth, fully come to. He was confused. There was a roaring in his ears and he was not certain whether it was the roar of the storm or not. The wind came sweeping from the lake with an incredible force. Protected by the walls of the gully, he did not feel

it, but it was snapping off pines on the hillsides, and on the lake it was rolling the waves far over the broken-down sea wall. He could hear the wash of them; together with the roar of the gale it made in his ears a symphony of storm.

And always the sand kept coming, coming. The wind scooped it up and laid it down again. The leveling process was on, and each hollow and depression was being filled. It came down into the gully like the fall of snow, only less gently. Rather, it pelted like fine hail, and he drew his coat over his face to protect it from the sting of the sand.

He caught his mind wandering. Martin Skager's prediction was coming true. To-morrow morning the gully would be filled level with sand. He and Jack would walk over the spot and mourn for the "death" of their gully.

But he would n't be able to walk — passing a hand over the block of concrete that pinned down his legs. So there must be something wrong in his reasoning. Jack would have to go alone.

Again the confusion cleared. If he stayed where he was he would be *under* the sand to-morrow morning instead of walking over it.

The mental picture was not wholly unpleasing. He would be snug and warm under the sand. . . . "At rest!" He remembered the phrase on various tombstones, and he thought of it now as having a slightly humorous connotation, as if the dead were having their little joke at the expense of the living. Jack would walk over the spot mourning for his gully; and he, Briar, would smile upward — snug, comfortable, at rest. And Hallie would stand over him and not know she was standing on his grave!

He would disappear completely from the earth, without leaving a trace. Rather a neat way of passing out. No messy remnants as in the case of John P. Nash. That kind of thing, for all of the pathos of death, was a little disgusting. But the dune sand was clean. That was its chief characteristic: it had been laundered by the sun and the wind and the rain. It would be like sleeping between fragrant, snowy sheets. There would be absolutely no trace. He had walked out of Martin Skager's cottage and that was the end. The sand might not be excavated out of the gully for five centuries.

Bunson would make a big hullabaloo about it in the "Herald." Briar could almost see the melodramatic phrases. He had an instinctive horror of melodrama, and he had always despised the kind of mind that naturally turned to it. And here he was to be the subject of it. It was the hills' little joke on him. He had a fine appreciation of the mildly ironic comedy of it. He had always, come to think of it, half tasted a flavor of irony in the dunes, but he had not guessed that it was to be like this.

No one would guess that he was near at hand. That would be so simple a solution of Bunson's "strange disappearance" that no one would think of it. They might drag the river for his body, but who ever heard of being drowned in the sand?

He half smiled under the protecting cover of his coat. That was something, by thunder, to be drowned in the sand!

Bunson would not guess it in a thousand years.

He was moved to generalization about Bunson. It amused him to limn the man:

"Bunson is a person who believes he's a big man thinking big thoughts, whereas in reality he's a very ordinary man thinking very ordinary thoughts."

He was almost childishly pleased with this characterization. There was no malice in it; he rather liked Bunson in many ways; but the man was always irritatingly assuming that his thoughts were bigger than they actually were. He was n't in fact entirely "real."

One part of Briar's mind understood that he was using these devices to keep his thoughts away from Hallie. There was pain there, and in the short time left him he instinctively avoided pain. If there was only enough material to occupy his thoughts until the sand closed over his head!

But there was not, and Hallie's image clamored for attention. It would have been divinely delightful to kiss her once more.

But it was better this way. He had made grandiose plans to go away. He remembered suddenly that he had never looked up the law on desertion as he had planned to do. But no matter. It was pretty certain that after a year or so she would be free. And this way was after all the sure way. He knew now that otherwise he could not have stayed away. And even if he could have done that, there would always have been that intolerable pain. While now he would be — at rest!

He felt about him with his hands. The sand was rising, rising, grain by grain.

He knew he was not entirely sane any more. Sane enough to think with a fair degree of consecutiveness, but

things appeared slightly distorted to him, as they might have done to a Dostoyevski character. The difference was that the character in the Russian's book would not have understood they were distorted, while he did.

He had done it all, all that he had planned. He had restored Barry, and now he was setting Hallie free. He knew now he had not actually meant to do it. In the final pinch he would not have had the courage. But the friendly dunes were proving his friends in death even more than they had ever been in life. It was the one solution, perfect. A so-called masterful man would have fought for the woman he loved — would have held her, satisfied with the shadow of her instead of the substance. But he despised any man who could accept the shadow for what was "real."

He felt himself becoming confused. He wondered if he would lose consciousness again . . .

If only he could have kissed her once more — on the lips — her warm, full lips . . .

CHAPTER XXXVI

HALLIE waited. There was nothing else to do. She was resolved to be patient. If only she had had the lights turned on, Briar would have stepped in a moment to tell her where he was going. She could not forget the haggardness of his face.

Had he failed? Had Barry, perhaps — ?

But she could not admit the possibility. She resolved not to be morbid. Of course he would look haggard after such an ordeal. It was the culminating point for him of years of intense and creative thought. It was not at all like any ordinary operation — not like any operation no matter how critical and complicated. It was everything — Achievement — Happiness! He had not said anything about that. But he would not say anything. Briar was not the man to articulate his emotions. That way lay sentimentalism, and she knew how he abhorred that.

And to be called into the storm immediately after, it was an imposition. John P. Nash might have had more consideration. And what was the sea wall to Briar? She wondered idly if perhaps Martin Skager was right and the sea wall would give way before the storm. Some one probably injured trying to prop it up. But there were other doctors in Finley. Nash had not always been so keen on Briar as a physician. She was conscious of a slight feeling of resentment.

There was no use getting supper. Briar would be back

any moment. Better wait till he was here. Perhaps he would help her in the kitchen as he used to do. She remembered with a little pang that for quite a while he had not done that. Not that it made much difference in the work, but the *camaraderie* of it had been delightful. It was nice to have him there to talk to, even to scold a little when he bungled things! There were some things he could do exceedingly well, with the facility of a woman almost, and there were others, some of them the most simple, that he would not learn to do if he lived to be a hundred. She knew he liked to be scolded a little — or, rather, he had liked it. For some time now they had not seemed near enough together for that intimate familiarity, she felt half guiltily. She had failed him, exactly how she did not quite understand. Briar's mind was not easy to read. There was nothing obvious about him. It might be as it had been with his interest in geology. She had failed him there. Had she also failed him in something more vital? She could not be sure.

Anyway, she was determined not to be morbid. Everything would change now. He had achieved. He had won — won for himself and her. No matter now if he should not be successful in the ordinary sense. Of course he would be; but even if he should not —

She would begin this very evening. Everything would be changed. The old intimacy would come back. He would help her in the kitchen again, and she would lightly scold him again!

The nine o'clock curfew startled her unreasonably. In the excitement of the evening she had not noted the pas-

sage of time, and because she was still waiting supper for Briar she assumed it was quite early. She discovered that the tense half-hour with Miss Steady and Rose on the beach had made her jumpy. It was absurd to jump at the noise of the curfew, especially on such a night of storm. The whistle could hardly be heard.

"Perhaps I thought it was another distress signal," she explained it to herself.

She turned out the light in the living-room, leaving the hall light burning. Then she sat down at the window to watch the wild swaying of the arc lights, throwing ghostly shadows over the sidewalks.

An hour passed. Hallie was still sitting at the window. She was very nervous now and her lips felt dry, but she was determined to be calm. There were a thousand good reasons why Briar had not yet returned. A serious accident, perhaps several men injured by the collapse of the sea wall. For she had made up her mind that the sea wall had collapsed. She had half a mind to call up Mildred to see if Nash had come home yet, but it seemed a little foolish. Nash would naturally have brought Briar home in his car. She did not confess to herself that the real reason was that she was afraid to walk across the dark living-room to the telephone in the dining-room. She knew that if she attempted to walk she would give way, and she was determined to be calm.

There was a loud stamping on the porch, and then the doorbell rang.

She stumbled to the door. The knuckles of her hand showed white on the knob.

It was Nash's caretaker. Hallie knew the man from her Carcassonne days when he had occasionally come to the cottage. He stood blinking in the electric glare of the hall. Then he quickly stepped out of the storm, and Hallie closed the door.

Hallie stood inarticulate. The caretaker was more apology than sensation bearer. He stammered through some sentences that Hallie did not grasp. As soon as she saw that he was not to tell her of disaster to Briar, things became dark before her eyes for a moment and she grasped the edge of the hall table.

When she could follow him again he was saying,

"Seein' as Dr. Quentin's her brother, I thought he might break the news to her."

The caretaker and his companions had been spreading the story of the suicide in Finley, not without relish in the sensation they were causing, until it occurred to the man that, as Nash's employee, it might be considered his duty to tell the family. Of course Dr. Quentin had seen the body, but, come to think of it, the doctor had looked a bit wild about the eyes. You never could tell about doctors — might be a dope fiend. Perhaps could n't be depended on. He had heard the man was a queer nut.

Hallie did not understand him; she had lost something at first.

"The news?"

The man looked uneasy. Perhaps this would prove as bad as if he had gone directly to Nash's wife.

"As how he done himself in when the hotel went to smash," he explained, not too illuminatingly.

"Done himself in?" she echoed — "Nash?"

"Yes, ma'am," apologetically, "with a pistol what he kept in the hotel — through the head," with an instinct for realistic drama.

To his surprise the doctor's wife did not shriek, as he had half expected. She was almost visibly pulling herself together.

"Dr. Quentin is with him?" She asked the question very quietly.

"Well, ma'am — no, ma'am — he ain't; — that is, he walked home," he stammered.

"Walked home!" Again she echoed his exact words. Again she gripped the edge of the table. "How long was that ago?"

The caretaker considered.

"Well, let's see, it's about ten now. About seven, I should say, when he came away from Martin Skager's. He ain't home yet, ma'am?"

The gleam of curiosity in his eyes did not escape Hallie.

"He did look kinda wild about the eyes, ma'am, come to think of it," he encouraged her, his appetite whetted for more melodrama.

"He's probably at his office," she said quietly. "Yes, Jim, Dr. Quentin will break it to Mrs. Nash," with an impatient gesture of dismissal.

As soon as the door closed she rushed to the telephone. But the office was dead, as she had expected. Next she rang up Miss Steady. She was very calm now, exaggeratedly so. Briar had probably taken shelter there — forgetting he would have called up if he had. No, he was not

there. Miss Steady was all concern, but Hallie said reassuringly it was nothing. He had probably gone back to Larramore Farms. She called up the Farms. The man who answered was surprised by the question, so that Hallie felt unaccountably ashamed. As if she were a fish-wife tracing a drunken spouse! So she hung up without asking about the operation. It had gone out of her mind.

It was not until a little later that she thought of Mildred, and a feeling of guilt took possession of her. She had been selfishly thinking of her own affairs, unheedful of the disaster that had come to the other woman. But the shock of Nash's suicide had hardly penetrated to her consciousness. It was only of a piece with the whole evening of horror.

Such news could not be broken to Mildred over the telephone. Also Hallie was too unstrung for the task. But she forced herself to arrange with Wayne Murdock to assume the unpleasant duty. Murdock was intimate with the Nashes.

This done, Hallie sat down at the window again. There seemed nothing else to do. She must wait again — interminable hours. But it was hard to sit still; she could not shake off the thought that more disaster was to follow.

"He looked kinda wild about the eyes, ma'am."

The man was obviously a sensation-monger, but the description tallied so exactly with her own brief glimpse of Briar's sensitive face early in the evening.

Had he failed, after all, and had Barry died under the knife? She decided now he had looked despondent. To walk home on such a night when there was an automobile

standing at the door for him! She wished she had asked about Barry, but she did not dare to call up again. . . .

When the clock struck eleven she could stand it no longer. She put on her heavy coat, carefully put a scarf about most of her face except the eyes. Then she went to the garage and backed Briar's roadster out into the street. She pointed it into the driving wind.

The car suddenly stopped a short distance beyond the place where the road branched to Carcassonne. The wheels were fast in a sand drift that blocked the road. The rest of the way must be made on foot.

She was very calm now and unafraid. She did not know what she was planning to do or exactly where she was going. She had a vague theory that Briar had met with an accident at the hotel. Leaving Martin Skager's he must have gone in that direction, else the men in the car must have overtaken him. He had probably wished to see the wreck of the hotel for himself. Or he had wanted to get a good look at the lake while a storm was on. He had often stood watching it at such times, awed by the majesty of its power.

She made a short cut. She would cross the bridge over the gully and then —

She heard talking. At the same moment she discovered the bridge railing was down.

She hesitated, listening.

Then she ran to the other end of the gully where it was shallow.

A moment later her arms were about him, and her lips — "her warm, full lips" — were touching his face.

"Of course it's a hallucination," he said in his reasonable way — his "scientific manner," Hallie always called it; "but, anyway, it's better than nothing. I might have expected this. I suppose I'm getting delirious. But I'll try to keep it up. Now kiss me again, Hallie . . . It's extraordinarily real! No wonder crazy people fight against their own cure! I think I'll go to sleep now, if you'll hold me like that, Hallie."

CHAPTER XXXVII

It was not until March that Briar was able to leave his bed and take up his long vigil in an invalid's chair. Both of his legs had been broken, one below and one above the knee, and the bone in one leg had splintered, which made the process of recovery long and tedious.

"Who would have thought that a pair of legs could make such a difference?" he joked about it to Hallie. "I never thought of my legs before, and now that's all I think about. First thing I wake up in the morning I think, 'Well, wonder how my old legs are to-day?' And last night I dreamed I was in heaven, and there was n't a wing to be seen on any of the angels; and the first thing I did was to look if they had any legs or not!"

He laughed good-humoredly.

"I'm getting legomania, I guess. This morning when I opened that Kipling book 'Old Steady' left here, the first thing I saw was 'Legs, Legs, Legs!' I thought for a minute I was off my nut, but that fool actually did write a poem on legs."

"Of course, Briar, did n't you ever read it before?"

"Did n't now," he shot back; "I fired the book under the bed. You'll find it there when you sweep. Do you suppose I want to *read* about legs?"

Hallie shook with spontaneous laughter. His face was so droll in its expression that she could not have restrained herself if she had wanted to. But she did not want to.

She had forced a laugh so often of late that it was good to let herself go. She fished the book from under the bed and began the search for the legs poem.

Briar watched her with half-humorous resentment.

"It would n't just open of itself at 'Legs' to you. But me — it just hits me in the eye, as the Bible is supposed to do at pat passages to sinners in a mission, if all the stories about that are to be believed."

She found the poem, but she did not read it to him. Instead she read it to herself, silently conning the lines, a smile on her lips. He watched her as a helpless child might watch its mother. She was so beautiful, so beautiful, and the face with its little smile was so resolute. There was force there and strength. It was not the face of a woman who is sorry for herself. There was a gleam of appreciation of the strength of the poem in her eyes. She was alive, her whole body aquiver with life.

His heart swelled with pity for her. Here she was, a woman on the threshold of life, tied to a man whose legs were useless appendages. For though the broken bones had been knit together, the paralysis persisted. And for a woman like that to go through life with a useless man tied to a wheel-chair!

"It's a confounded shame!" he was thinking.

Hallie closed the book, her eyes still alight. And she seemed to divine what was in his mind. She came over to him, and standing beside his chair, she pressed his head against her breast.

Tears sprang into her eyes, but Briar could not see them. And to put him off the scent, she pretended gayety.

"We'll break loose, Briar, soon as you're back on your old legs; we'll go on a regular spree!"

"In the old roadster," he met her mood of hopefulness; "go tramping. Hitch on a trailer with a tent and a frying-pan and start on the road that leads to —"

"To Carcassonne!" she interrupted him and kissed him on his hair. "Carcassonne" was now their synonym for happiness.

"Of course to Carcassonne, Hallie," pressing the hand that rested on his shoulder. "Oh, we'll have a high old time all right." And silently he congratulated himself that he was making it sound so spontaneous. Hallie, with a strong effort of will, controlled a quiver in her throat. His effort at deceiving her was so pathetic. She wished she were safely out of the room. It would never do to break down.

She rumpled his hair with her hand, trying to convey her supposed gayety of heart to him with a gesture instead of with words.

They were silent for a little while. Hallie's eyes, though still shiny with the tears she dared not let flow, held a look that was not far from happiness, in spite of its shadow of trouble. She was looking fixedly at the little bronze clock on the table.

"We don't have to hunt for 'Carcassonne' any more, Briar. We've found it!"

Then fearful lest he should think her merely sentimental, which was the unforgivable sin to him, she added;

"I mean that, dear, literally. You've achieved — articles about you in the 'American Medical Journal,'

magazines printing your picture, Barry back at his job as the manager of the world-famous Larramore mines, men like Hazzeldeen writing about you with respect, old Larramore buying a thousand acres of dunes and getting ready to erect an institute near Martin Skager's cottage and insisting that it shall be named the 'Briar Quentin Institute.' You're a celebrity, Briar, a—a—" She searched for a word. Then with a gay little laugh, "A whale of a celebrity!"

"But a legless one!" he chuckled.

"Oh, that's nothing; you'll soon be sprinting like a kid again."

"And climbing the Crownéd Monarch."

"Yes, and climbing the Crownéd Monarch," with a flutter of apprehension that he would hear the catch in her voice.

She was a strange new Hallie to Briar. Never any more a dark mood, cheerful with an irrepressible gayety. She did not really understand about his legs; it was impossible that she understood, or she could not be so cheerful. And he dared not tell her. It would have to be faced some time, but from day to day and from week to week they clung to the fiction that he was soon to be on his feet again.

They were the perfect lovers again of the first year of their marriage.

"I wish I could kick myself!" Briar often thought during the long hours that necessarily he had to spend alone. He had been an ass — a fool with the brain of a movie hero. "Just a good, swift, soul-satisfying kick. — But what's a legless man good for?" with a tinge of bitterness in the thought.

He would never tell Hallie about what he had been through. That was one thing better left unexpressed between them. He knew there was a popular notion that a man and a woman between whom there is perfect trust have no reservations from each other, but he was too honest with himself to regard this as more than a sentimental myth. Only a person whose soul was n't worth revealing could reveal his whole soul to another. Briar in his helplessness, as always, was intensely conscious of his own ego.

He did not dare think of the future. They were beginning to build the "Briar Quentin Institute," and the "Herald" was daily aglow with the story. It was big, by thunder, Bunson reminded himself sometimes in the middle of the night, when he happened to wake up in the darkness, big! But that did n't help Briar any. What good could it do to a legless man in a wheel-chair? Oh, old man Larramore was ready to meet any situation. He had told Briar and Hallie so a hundred times; but he knew and they knew that it was out of the question. Dr. Hazzeldeen was in Europe gathering a staff for the institute, and it was understood that Briar was to have an important post on that staff, legs or no legs. But all that was a pleasant fiction. It would n't do. Neither he nor Hallie could think of it. They never talked about it, but they understood. He could never endure to be a "consulting specialist" without any real duties. It would be hell.

"My confounded old legs!" he murmured.

An absurd story sprang up in the newspapers that this hitherto obscure young scientist had grafted a new brain

on the son of the famous iron king. The legend had quite a run for a few months, largely because of the prominence of the patient's father. Some clever newspaper writer was able to twist an article by Dr. Hazzeldeen in the "Medical Journal," describing the scientific aspects of the case, into a tale that the newspapers grabbed with the avidity of a hungry man for food. It was tremendous — a new brain! No matter if it did n't sound over-plausible, it was good copy. And if scientists could give a man a new stomach, and could graft the glands from a condemned criminal onto three score years and ten, renewing an old man's youth like the eagle, then why not a new brain? Or a new heart? The American public was as eager as always to be entertained by a scientific fairy story.

For a while the newspaper paragraphers and cartoonists played with the idea: Suppose a scientific wag should cause an exchange of brains between a reactionary United States Senator and a soap-box Socialist — assuming that either of them had brains! Or imagine what would happen if a minister and a ballet dancer should get their brains mixed!

Briar gained a considerable amount of notoriety out of it. And this idle newspaper tittle-tattle impressed Finley far more with Briar's importance than any amount of genuine scientific comment from fellow-scientists. When the great Lordahl, of Johns Hopkins, wrote an article about the case, it made no stir in Finley, although Briar secretly swelled up with pride when Hallie brought him the magazine. It was good to be recognized by one who understood and who did not waste time with silly inessentials. But

Finley remained unimpressed until the stories about grafting new brains began to appear in the big papers. Then the town began to notice. It was immense! This Quentin fellow was a great man! Who would have thought it?

Hallie was secretly pleased with the notoriety. It did not mean anything, of course, but it was good to have Briar throw Washburn and the others in the shade at their own game. It was good to have Finley forced to accept him. It seemed the only way to make Finley learn that he really counted.

She sometimes teasingly tried to convert Briar to this point of view, but he remained contemptuous toward his notoriety:

"Like a confounded tenth-rate writer going to jail for murdering his wife and burying her in his cellar, and then selling his poor stuff to the magazines by the bushel basketful on the strength of the sensation!"

She laughed at him.

"Oh, but you're such a prosy scientist; your forehead's beginning to get a bulge!"

And she manipulated the skin of his forehead into corrugations with her fingers, as she used to do in the old days.

"Seamed with care and wisdom!"

He caught her to him, straightway forgetting the delinquencies of average human nature. It was good to have her thus — gay, light-hearted, making fun of his serious moods.

And he did not know that sometimes a lump came into

her throat so that she had to rush out into another room to put her arms on the table and cry.

They were very happy now, but what would happen when the truth was forced into the open that he would be condemned to a wheel-chair for life? That was the black shadow back of the gayest laughter of each of them. And just at a time when opportunity was holding all doors wide open for him at last.

Hallie after a time faced it with her usual direct courage. From now on it would be up to her. She had expressed the wish once that she were the man. Very well, the wish had been granted, in life's usual sardonic way. Neither she nor Briar could accept charity from Larramore or any one, no matter how well disguised. From now on it was up to her to make a living for the two of them. She would have to win Achievement alone. For she did not yield a single jot of her dreams. She would make them all come true. She would go to work.

She had a number of secret conferences with old Wayne Murdock, of the Finley Belting Works. He promised to give her a chance in his office in a month or two. For the rest it would depend on herself. Her eyes became cold with determination.

The great ordeal was not the work, but telling Briar about it. It would be a little like pronouncing a death sentence on him, and she did not have the courage for that. She shrank from it, and it was the thought of it that made her choke with pity in the middle of the gayest laugh.

And then abruptly, one evening, while he was reading to her from a magazine and she was sewing across the

table from him, he stopped in the middle of a sentence. A look of half-scared awe came into his face. Hallie, surprised by the interruption, glanced up from her work. His face was very white.

"Why, Briar, what — "

But he interrupted her. "Hallie!" The word was a mingling of anguish and excitement.

Hallie dropped her sewing on the floor and ran to him.

For a moment he could not say more. Then —

"I believe, Hallie — I believe I can move my legs!"

"You believe!" In her excitement she tore the quilt off his lap.

"I've got a feeling I can — don't know why — just a feeling!"

She stood there with the quilt in her hand, unable to move, fascinated, her eyes on his legs. It seemed a century, but it was only a fraction of a second.

Slowly, with infinite care, as if they were made of fragile porcelain, he lifted up first one leg, then another, lifted them four or five inches from the foot-rest of the wheel-chair. Then with a laugh that broke into something resembling a sob, he shouted:

"I've done it! I've done it, by thunder!"

Things suddenly went black before Hallie's eyes. She sank down beside Briar's chair and sobbed out her relief and her great happiness, her head pressed down on what he was always calling his "confounded old legs!"

. . . The dunes would be their home from now on. This would be their world. Their work-life and their play-life

would be identified with the sand hills. They would make excursions into the great world (there was the old dream of a year in Vienna already taking definite shape), but always they would come back here. Here lay Achievement. Happy years of hard work were opening out to them, and they were eager to grapple with the new life, together.

And the dunes they could always depend upon, because the spirit of the hills was in their hearts — the hills, always changing, yet always the same; constant in all their mutability; beautiful with the unconscious artistry of a million years of sun and storm; luminous with the unassuming splendor of all things true and genuine; unheedful of the hopes and fears, the loves and hates of men; regarding not the lives of the plants growing joyously on their slopes, or the cries of the birds wheeling about their crowns, or the hunger of the little animals roaming over them in their prowling search for food; going onward in their course with blind and unfeeling inexorability, yet having somehow, for those who understand, the warm, living spirit of the earth itself at the heart of them.

They would always come back to the hills and search, of a summer evening, on the top of the Crownéd Monarch, for their star. And they would always find it, shining with serene unconsciousness of their existence, in its familiar place near the edge of the faintly silhouetted beechnut-tree.

THE END

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